University of Alberta

'Blind-Spots:' Employment Equity and the disconnect between policy and practice

by

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Abstract

While both academic literature and independent studies clearly indicate that there is a racial divide in Canada, and social construction of 'race' leads to unequal treatment toward racialized workers, employers continually deny the existence of racism (Foote & Khan, 2006; Alboim, 2002; Carl, 1999,). The case study showcased in this work demonstrates that employers have internalized Eurocentric ideology, and by merely meeting the criteria for Employment Equity and celebrating cultures, employers consider that their workplaces are equitable and form a racism-free environment. Hence, combating racism in the workplace is clearly a complicated issue that necessitates cooperation and commitment from both management and racialized workers. Unless White employers examine their privilege and the socio-historical roots of racism in Canada, and take ownership of the issues, they are likely to conclude that they are not part of the problem, and thereby not look for solutions. Racialized workers need to be part of their own liberation; open up spaces, dialogue, form alliances with both White and non-White colleagues and other stakeholders.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the racialized workers in Canada who lack space to share and discuss their struggles. I encourage you to reach out and build alliances with someone you trust, be it a close friend, counselor, human resource manager, colleague or a government official. The silence must be broken; we must raise our voices both individually and collectively. Racialized workers need to take ownership, be fully aware of risks and act accordingly.

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Chapter 1

Background to the Study

Introduction

A keynote speaker at a national conference on immigration and integration recently made reference to the feminist's cliché "*you have come a long way baby*" in describing and analyzing Canada's immigration history. He further added that "immigrants are always welcome, their diversity is celebrated and they mostly arrive to this great land to fulfill their dreams." Speaking from his social location: an able bodied, upper-middle class male of Irish-Scottish heritage, he flaunted his family's success and stated that "all Canadians are equal and everyone including the newcomers can "make it" just like his ancestors did decades earlier." This discourse may resonate well with Euro-Canadians; however, these sentiments were certainly contested by the group of 'people of color[1]' attending the presentation. Unlike the guest speaker, these individuals were not suffering from historical amnesia and they are cognizant of Canada's exclusionary and racist immigration policies during late 1800s, early 1900s (Fleras & Elliot, 1992) and into the second half of the 20th century (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004).

The visible minority workers attending the workshop either worked with the Federal government and/or with Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). The reality for these people was noticeably different from the reality of the

[1] The term is used to refer to non-white people and is used interchangeably with visible minority and racialized people.

keynote speaker mentioned above. First, many reported that their international qualifications were not recognized. Others, in spite of acquiring the necessary Canadian credentials, were underemployed at best, or their skills and knowledge exploited at worst. Second, these individuals either experienced racism directly or heard similar narratives from "people of color", be it newcomers or second generation Canadians. Third, the visible minority workers perceived that they were often overlooked for promotions and seldom held positions of power as supervisors and managers.

It is noteworthy that the conference on immigration and integration took place in an upscale hotel in Montreal, and was attended primarily by government officials with a few 'token' visible minority delegates. Interestingly, the students from a local university barricaded the entrance and were protesting outside the hotel. The student-protestors raised issues such as discrimination, racism toward immigrants and demanded policy reforms, in particular refugees' rights. Most of the protestors were second-generation immigrant Canadians and spoke fluent English and French; hence, communication was not a barrier. Ironically, the organizers of the conference and their supporters turned a "deaf ear" and mostly ignored, excluded and shut out the protestors. In fact, no effort was made to either address issues raised by the student-protestors or discuss the impact of the protest on the delegates.

During the plenary session, a visible minority participant initiated a dialogue, highlighted key issues pertaining to workplace discrimination and

harassment and expected the panel to respond to his queries. However, the White[2] facilitator swiftly reminded the inquirer about the limited time, which brought the conversation to a halt. To use a metaphor, the "air was so thick, that one could slice it with a knife." Generally speaking, most White delegates were uncomfortable making eye contact with me. There were pockets of people, either colleagues or peers hovering in corners and talking secretively. It was obvious that most White people could see, hear, and felt uncomfortable about the situation, but elected not to discuss the issue in public. When visible minority participants shared their experiences of both direct and systemic discrimination and racism, facilitators immediately made reference to Canada's official Multi-Cultural policy, Human Rights Legislation and the Employment Equity Act. The majority of White European-Canadians[3] at the conference resisted the existence of discrimination and racism toward "people of color" in Canadian society.

Foundation of the Thesis

The conference in Montreal had a profound effect on me and arguably laid the foundation for this thesis (although I was not aware of it at that time). From the onset, I identified with the student-protestors and their passionate plea for social justice and immigration reforms. A few weeks later, while writing a briefing document about the conference, I reflected on my experience and

[2] The word "White" is capitalized for emphasis.
[3] These folks, be it second, third or fourth generation claim to be 'Canadians,' in fact they too are immigrants, albeit they have a European heritage.

wondered why, despite the literature and lived experiences of "people of color," White Euro-Canadians, especially those in positions of power, resist and contest that racism is prevalent in Canadian society? I also questioned why there was a disconnect between policy and pragmatism. For example, protective legislations such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees fundamental human rights, protection and dignity. On the other hand, a conference on immigration and integration funded by the federal government can possibly ignore pleas of protestors and marginalize experiences of visible minority delegates? Although I was unable to answer these questions at the time, they troubled me and remained with me for several years. During the same timeframe I also continued working at a local immigrant-serving agency, where I was subjected to systemic racism and also counseled visible minority clients who were experiencing similar fates[4].

However, in 2006, I had an opportunity to work on a project titled Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative (ARWI), which explored the federal government's role in promoting equity in the workplace and it examined employers' perceptions of racism in the workplace. The ARWI study is detailed in Chapter 4. Suffice it to say that, as a co-researcher, I was deeply troubled by the findings, and committed myself to explore issues of "race"[5] and racism in workplaces. I read, attended workshops and registered in classes, which provided the theoretical and conceptual framework for a richer understanding of racism in workplace. As a

[4] The clients shared similar stories of discrimination and racism.
[5] The quotation mark indicates that I cater to the ideology that "race" is a social construction by white European colonizers.

matter of fact, I wrote a journal article which explores racism in Canadian workplaces in general, and the refutation of the existence of racism by White employers. Thus, the ARWI study served as an exceptional case study which solidified my commitment to exploring the issues of "resistance and contestation" and critically examining the findings. To achieve that, this thesis intends to address the following two major questions and related sub questions:

1. Does protective legislation ensure equity in the workplace?
    a. What is protective legislation?
    b. Who is covered under these legislations?
    c. What is equity?
    d. Who are the equity groups?
2. Why do White Euro-Canadian employers refute the existence of racism?
    a. What are the ways in which they resist racism as a Canadian issue?
    b. What does racism looks like in the workplace?
    c. What is their perspective on equity?

However, before exploring the questions at length and engaging in a detailed discussion, it is worth noting that this study is grounded in lived experiences which is the topic of the next section.

Experiences and Encounters of Racism: A Personal Narrative

The chief purpose of this section is to share personal encounters with racism in Canadian society, work and related experiences. I begin with a brief

autobiographical narrative. The following section highlights key incidences which took place in junior high school, post-secondary institutions and workplaces.

First Contact: Junior High School

I was twelve years old when I arrived with my parents and an older sibling in Calgary. In September of the same year, my sponsor, an older sibling, enrolled both my sister and I in a junior high school in the North West section of Calgary. I spoke with school officials and wrote a few tests for English, Math and Science. Shortly thereafter, I was informed by the vice principal that my English was not perfect, I did not meet "Canadian" standards and in fact had an accent. The news did not sit well with my anxious parents who anticipated that both my sister and I would do poorly and perhaps lose a year of study. Nevertheless, a few weeks later, I was overjoyed to learn that I was being placed in grade 8, which was appropriate for my age.

The excitement, however, was short lived, because as soon as I set foot in the classroom and was introduced as the "new kid" in the class, I was treated differently from the other students. Aside from the obvious physical characteristics such as the skin and eye color, my mannerisms and demeanor were distinct from those of the Euro-Canadian youths. For example, the local students spoke high-speed slang English and chewed gum continuously and for the most part were difficult to understand. The school followed a no-uniform policy and grade eight girls were allowed to wear makeup and shirts with logos. Students

were not expected to stand to speak to the teacher, request permission to go to the washroom, sharpen their pencils or talk to their classmates. Considering that I had attended primary schools in Asia and the Middle East, and had had authoritative school administrators, I was not accustomed to such peculiarities and customs. Therefore, I typically dressed formally and generally wore black pants, white shirts, matching blazers, dress, shoes, and tied my hair in a bun or a ponytail. During class I stood up to address the teacher, asked for permission to leave the classroom and waited patiently for the official bell before leaving the classroom.

A few weeks into the regular semester, I realized that my sister and I were the only East-Indian students, hence we were a minority[6]. Although, there were students from other countries such as China, Philippines and the Caribbean, we could not form bonds with these students because some had formed alliances with the White bullies and others (out of fear or lack of care) remained silent during most conflicts. Nevertheless, their presence was insignificant in comparison to White students. It is difficult to conclude whether the other minority students were also teased, harassed and experienced racism.

My sister and I were subjected to stereotype, prejudice and overt racism. Verbal abuse included racial slurs such as "Paki" and "dirty-Indians," which was typically followed by physical abuse such as being pushed, shoved and tripped. The bullying and name-calling was not limited to the confines of the school, but in fact started as soon I boarded the yellow school bus every morning and

[6] It is possible that there were East Indian or Indo-Pakistani students in the school; however, I never encountered them in either the school assembly, hallways and classrooms.

continued during recess and lunch time and in the play grounds. Ironically, the White bus driver, in-service and substitute teachers neither saw, felt, nor heard racism. In fact, when my sister and I complained to the guidance counselor, her response was most shocking, as she in a nonchalant manner rendered her verdict and suggested that we either ignore the bullies or learn to deal with the situation. Her rationale was that by ignoring the bullying[7], both verbal and physical violence would subside eventually. She went a step further by suggesting that perhaps my sister and I were the instigators and provoked the bullies.

I realize that name-callings and bullying are common occurrences in junior and senior high school, the overt racism, as I experienced it, most certainly had a negative impact. The physical violence and verbal abuse resulted in reduced mental, physical and emotional well-being. The highly stressful situation made it difficult for me to concentrate on my studies and attend school. It is difficult to select a particular incident, especially considering that each day brought in new obstacles. For example, the boys in the classroom used physical violence such as either pulling out my chair under me, or pushing the desk toward me. They also destroyed my artwork and left chewed gum on my desk. The White girls were much more polite in comparison to the boys; they rarely spoke to my sister and me but refused to partner with us for sports and recreational activities.

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[7] There is a growing body of literature around bullying (and no doubt racist aspects of this phenomenon). For information on racially motivated bullying versus 'bullying' in general, visit Federal Education departments in Australia and Ireland.
http://www.ema.gov.au/agd/www/Ncphome.nsf/0/88FCF8BA60E07DDACA256C1B000AFD58?OpenDocument and http://donegallpass.org/Racist_Harassment_in_NI.pdf

Aside from overt racist remarks, physical violence and vandalism, there were multiple incidents, which were both painful and downright embarrassing. For example, a social studies teacher seated students according to the grades they earned during the mid-term exam. Obviously I was new to the country and was having a difficult time catching up to the social studies curriculum and sat at the very back of the classroom. Teachers publicly inquired if I was going to have an arranged marriage and wondered, since I had lived in Middle East, whether I had lived in a tent and ridden a camel. To sum up, my existential experience of racism in junior high and the ignorance of racism on the part of the students and teachers was psychologically, physiologically and physically damaging. The symptoms included cuts and bruises, loss of appetite, low blood pressure, isolation, low-self esteem, depression and at times suicidal thoughts.

Second Encounter: Spill over from School to Workplace

I have worked in Canada for over twenty-four years in various capacities in a range of industries. A detailed list may appear superfluous, but is, nevertheless, essential. Starting from the first job to my current position, I have worked as a sales associate, medical receptionist, esthetician, campaign worker, employment developer, community worker, project coordinator and research assistant. My experience included the following sectors: retail, food industry, health, medical services, post-secondary institutions, non-government agency and social services. The White supervisors, managers and colleagues that I have

encountered are akin to the students in the junior high. However, they are unique, as they generally did not resort to blatant/overt forms of racism such as racial slurs, harassment and violence. They practice a different type of racism that is subtle and covert - in other words, "polite-racism."

Once again, starting from my earliest job as a sales associate to my current position as a research assistant, there are numerous encounters of harassment, discrimination and racism; however, I will share only a few incidents that are appropriate in this context. During high school, I worked part-time at a shoe store in Calgary with three White workers: two females and one male. It appeared that on most shifts, I was responsible for menial jobs such as taking out the garbage, dusting the shelves, polishing the shoes and vacuuming the carpet. Naturally, administrative duties such as cashing-out, depositing the funds into the bank, making schedules including break times were allocated to White workers. The White staff members were allowed to take extended breaks without being reprimanded by the supervisor; however, I was often reminded of company policies such as "the fifteen minutes break time" and "half-hour lunch time." The supervisor consistently inquired about my place of birth, heritage, and reasons for coming to Canada, and speculated as to why I had not returned to my home country. Interestingly, White colleagues were not subjected to the same scrutiny and interrogation.

In my 20s, I worked for a social services agency in Edmonton, where I learned the significance of the absence of "voice." I worked primarily with

newcomers and immigrant families who were experiencing difficulties adjusting to the new culture. There were approximately twelve White co-workers and three visible minority workers. During the monthly staff meetings, it was a common practice to share personal opinions and comment on the items on the agenda. Within a short time of working for this organization it became apparent that comments and suggestions made by visible minority workers were generally ignored. On a few occasions, I offered some suggestions which impressed a White colleague, who then took ownership of the issue. Hence, her ideas and thoughts were recorded on the flip chart, as she received acknowledgment and appreciation from staff members. Inviting guest speakers during both monthly staff meetings and staff retreats were common occurrences. However, supervisors introduced selected employees whereas visible minority workers were frequently ignored.

During my 30s, I worked for an immigrant-serving agency where, in spite of an immaculate job performance evaluation for over five years, I was overlooked for promotion. In the meantime, Euro-Canadian workers with and without accents, lack of certifications, poor health histories and high absenteeism, and rude "non-professional behaviors," acquired positions of power as supervisors and managers. When I brought the pertaining issues to my director, he diverted the topic and suggested that perhaps "I was more suitable in a corporate environment and not a non-governmental agency." I also initiated numerous projects and worked on various assignments including employer recognition awards, fund-raising events, business mixers. I wrote manuals, invited dignitaries

and raised the company's profile. However, White colleagues undermined my efforts, claimed the projects as their ideas and received public acknowledgement from the management team.

As mentioned in the introduction, my work has informed me about racism, both as a worker within the system, and also as an employment counselor and job developer in an immigrant-serving agency assisting primarily non-White Internationally Educated Immigrants (IEP). I will now crossover from my personal experiences and focus on the experiences of my clients. It is noteworthy that my role as an employment counselor was to assist the newly arrived immigrant professionals with their career planning and job search strategies. As a job developer, my role was to build relationships with employers and market clients. After spending five dealing with White employers, I am comfortable in declaring that most displayed racist tendencies. While the Leftists (those catering to the Liberal ideology) suggested that newcomers simply change their names to Euro-Canadian names, the conservative employers inquired if applicants could possibly remove their turbans, Bindi[8] and Hijab[9]. The extreme Right Wing employers made explicit remarks about race and requested primarily White European workers. For example, a local bakery requested primarily German workers while the president of a modular home company requested Ukrainians and Russians.

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[8] A bindi meaning a 'dot' is a forehead decoration worn in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

[9] Hijab refers to women's head and body covering.

Third Encounter: Post-secondary Institutions

Reflecting back on my undergraduate experience at the local college and university, I can unequivocally assert that I have always felt alienated and "shut-out" by White students. Compounding the problem was a lack of critical understanding of theories, concepts and socio-political and historical concepts of "race"/racism. However, I have always had the intuition that something was not right. It was not until I started the graduate program at University of Alberta that I gained a richer understanding of the social construction of "race" and hierarchy of skin colors, ethnicity and social class. My formal learning about race and identity was in Jennifer Kelly's class – "Contemporary Issues in Education: Perspectives on Policy and Practice." Another course which had a profound impact on me was a social theory class with Dr. Jerry Kachur. Finally, the Foundations of Education: Perspectives on International Issues with Dr. Ali Abdi transformed my perspective and I began to examine social relations much more critically.

It is noteworthy that "these teachers, without whom it would have been impossible for me to learn" (Freire, 1992, p. 17) were also receptive to my ideas and created space in the classroom to discuss issues such as racism in the workplace. Both classroom discussions and the readings provided an insight into the power relations between the dominant White group and minority ethnic groups in Canadian society. For the first time, the alienation and humiliation I experienced in junior high school and work places could now be explained via

theories such as: colonization, post-colonization, imperialism, capitalism, globalization and in particular White privilege and power.

I benefited tremendously from my experiences at the University of Alberta both as a student and as a research assistant. Having served on various boards and sub-committees, I became familiar with the internal workings and processes. Suffice it to say that race definitely plays a crucial role in terms of who acquires significant positions and receives pubic accolades. I would now like to make a few general statements and mention only one incident. First of all, in spite of my instructors' best efforts to create safe and equitable learning environments, visible minority students are less likely to challenge the White majority. My personal experience from working on class assignments and projects is that White students overshadowed my voice and minimized issues of racism. In fact, in one particular situation I challenged a White student to take ownership of Canada's racist immigration policies and current practices toward "people of color", to which she responded that "I am tired of apologizing for what my ancestors did in the past and I am not sure if we [White] people should continue apologizing or exploiting these folks."

Despite an official policy at University of Alberta to hire members of four equity groups, I have observed unmerited and biased hiring and promotion practices. During the official recruitment phase, job advertisements are typically posted in mainstream newspapers, electronic media and internal newsletters. Naturally, there are internal referrals and recommendations for particular

candidates. It appears that certain applicants, in particular members of visible minorities, Aboriginals and people with disabilities never get past the screening phase, which is generally conducted by the chair and the selection committee. Graduate students are given the impression that their voices and opinions are significant and will in fact have direct influence on the outcome.

However, closer examination reveals that most hiring decisions are made by peers who select others from similar educational backgrounds and Euro-Canadian ideology. It is reasonable to suggest that students generally hold less power than most professors; hence it is extremely difficult for student representatives to challenge decisions made by the hiring committee.

In summary, it is fair to declare that only a handful of students receive public recognition, support, guidance and mentorship. Although the official policy at the university clearly indicates fair and equitable hiring practices, most student job opportunities are not public information and often are the result of networking and nepotism. Furthermore, offices are opened and jobs are created under the guise of providing fair and equitable services to international students and immigrants; however, there is usually no direct relationship between research and social change. Department heads, generally of Euro-Canadian descent, serve in positions of power as experts and "speak of" and "speak about" experiences of marginalized students.

Significance of the Study

It has been well over ten years since I first encountered the prevalent discourse on internationally trained immigrants and their challenges in gaining access to meaningful employment (see: Alboim, 2002; Reitz, 2001; Li, 1999). Fast forward to 2007, and the environment has not changed much. A recent study by Statistics Canada states that newcomers to Canada are more highly educated on average than their Canadian-born counterparts; however, their unemployment rates are significantly higher (Proudfoot, 2007).

In 2006 "almost 12% of immigrants who had been in Canada for five years or less were unemployed – more than double the 5% jobless rate for native-born Canadians" (p. 2). There are many possible explanations, one being the lack of recognition of international credentials, Canadian experience, in addition to language and culture barriers. However, I believe that White Euro-Canadians keep insisting that newcomers adhere to the Canadian norms and practices. Also due to preconceived notions they are often reluctant to hire racialized workers out of fear that they might not "gel-in" in other words, fit in the workplaces.

At the local level, according to Alberta Economic Development, Edmonton is rated as one of the top most preferred destinations in western North America. The provincial capital region continually attracts businesses from around the world, is a tourist destination of choice, and is known for its diversity and festivities. Edmonton is no doubt part of the "Alberta Advantage" and is currently in the phase of an economic boom thanks to the oil and gas industry.

While Albertans have reasons to celebrate, businesses are facing critical shortages of skilled and non-skilled workers across all sectors. To combat the issue, the Alberta government has announced that it is going to try to increase immigration to Alberta.

The minister of Advanced Education and Community Development[10] recently announced that Edmonton will attract immigrants to alleviate some of the labour shortages. This new wave of immigrants will be arriving mainly from non-traditional source countries such as China, India, Pakistan and Philippines (Statistics Canada, 2005) resulting in greater visibility of "races," ethnicities and cultures. As a result, workplaces will mirror similar demographics and will be forced to tackle issues of "race" and racism, necessitating anti-racism education in the workplaces. Moreover, most employers are forced either by provincial or federal legislation to embrace equity and create a diversified workforce.

Implications of the Study

It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to a richer understanding of equity in regulated and not regulated workplaces. Secondly, the discussion will also lead to development of curriculum for diversity and anti-racism education both in schools and workplaces. The ARWI study and analysis provides an opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of the White employers perceptions and reasons for resisting acknowledgment of racism in Canadian

[10] Also known as Advanced Education and Technology

workplaces. It is evident that equity policies (including the Employment Equity Act) are ineffective in ensuring equitable representation and promotion of visible minority workers; therefore, managers and directors need to re-examine existing policies and practices. In addition, White managers and directors need to explore alternatives to EEA that will ensure equity. Finally, my personal encounters/narratives and experiences will expand understanding of racism in both educational institutions and workplaces.

Limitations and Delimitation

One of the possible limitations is the significant reliance on a single study – Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative (ARWI). Although I acknowledge that my thesis is a partial narrative, I do not make generalizations or claim that all White employers share a parallel mono-paradigm. In fact, I have witnessed a few Euro-Canadians employers and employees joining forces with visible minority workers, enforcing the Employment Equity legislation and creating inclusive racism-free work environments. I, too have been mentored, supported and guided by White colleagues, friends and professors. To use Dorothy Smith's term I often suffer from a "bifurcated consciousness," (an "uneasiness" when I attempt to negotiate two mismatched worlds, dominant knowledge concepts versus lived experience). The ARWI study involves qualitative research and is based on subjective experiences of employers, it is open to interpretation and researcher's bias.

I am often reminded by my professors that academic writing explicates that authors are aware of their personal and research limitations. The standard practice in academic discourse is a continuous cycle of limitations and delimitations. Likewise, anytime I use the phrase "racism in the workplace" I get multiple responses from professors and fellow students, who view the very topic from their own social locations and zealously insist that I examine the topic through their lens, which is either influenced by gender or social class. Likewise, dialogue with White employers on "race"/racism in workplaces often diverts to topics such as: the principles of the Employment Equity Act, Multiculturalism, diversity training and hiring practices based on merit. Although I find these interactions and dialogues informative and enlightening, I believe that the saliency of "race" in particular, "skin color," is minimized. Likewise, I am cognizant of the intersection of gender, social class and ethnicity, but have selected a focus on the salient and essential feature of skin color as a marker of "difference."

Another important point worth mentioning is that despite my marginalized position, I am fully aware of my privileges. First of all, I am able to speak read and write in one of the official languages, i.e. English. Second, I have received my primary and secondary education and have had access to post-secondary institutions. I also have the opportunity to complete a Master's thesis at a well-known university. Through my graduate course work, my knowledge of race,

social class, gender and power has increased immensely. Hence, I have the tools and the linguistics proficiency to challenge racism in organizations.

Third, I have been given opportunities to work on projects pertaining to "race", anti-racism, human rights and community services. The positions I have acquired have allowed for a deeper understanding of the intricate details and covert nature of racism in Canadian workplaces. According to Heuristic tradition, lived experience is crucial to understanding phenomenon and I certainly have knowledge of class, gender and race.

Organization of the Thesis

Beyond this introduction chapter this thesis has four additional chapters. The second chapter is titled Literature Review and Theoretical Analysis and focuses on three major bodies of literature that inform the study: Post-Colonial Theory in particular "Orientalism," Critical Race Theory, and White Privilege and Power. This chapter also provides a brief discussion of the Labour Program and background to the Employment Equity Act. The third chapter focuses on the methodology, which has its foundation in qualitative research with particular reference to content analysis that is grounded in the Hermeneutic tradition. The fourth chapter, Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative (ARWI), discusses and analyzes the findings of the study. The fifth chapter focuses on Anti-Racism Education, complemented by general conclusions and recommendations from the thesis.

Conclusion

While both academic literature and independent studies clearly indicate that there is a racial divide in Canada, and that social construction of "race" leads to unequal treatment of racialized workers, employers continually deny the existence of racism (Alboim, 2002, James, 1999, Foote & Khan, 2006). The case study showcased in this paper demonstrates that employers have internalized Eurocentric ideology, and by merely meeting the criteria for Employment Equity, and celebrating cultures, employers consider that their workplaces are equitable and constitute racism-free environment. Hence, combating racism in the workplace is clearly a complicated issue that necessitates cooperation and commitment from both management and racialized workers. Unless White employers examine their privilege and the socio-historical roots of racism in Canada, and take ownership of the issues, they are likely to conclude that they are not part of the problem, and as a result will not look for solutions. Racialized workers need to be part of their own liberation; open up spaces, dialogue and form alliances with both White and non-White colleagues and other stakeholders.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Analysis

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview to the theoretical background and conceptual framework of this study. To begin the discussion, the historical roots of "race" will be reviewed and definitions and models of racism will be provided. Contemporary theories of racism that highlight ideological notions of the "other", and the role of "difference" and "othering" concepts that are derived from Post-Colonial theories, will be discussed. Related to this subject are two concepts: Critical Race Theory and White Privilege and Power. Neo-Liberal policies of inclusion and equity in the Canadian Context will be examined.

Conceptual Framework

Whether we conceptualize of "race" in terms of biological or social constructs, literary sources and anecdotes exit suggesting that "race" is not simply an abstract or a theoretical concept, but is factual and real. Our society is color-conscious and race matters in human lives and social interactions. Post-colonial, feminist writers vehemently insist that we must problematize the social construction of race, and develop methods in which "Whites are provided an opportunity to express views about race, while being held accountable for them" (Hurtado & Stewart, 1997, p. 309). Others argue, "it is the social practice of

racism which is the problem, not the theoretical conception of race per se". (Dei, 1996, p. 40).

Rather than debating endlessly about its construction, I believe that we should focus on "how race continues to gain in social currency [and] its utility in distributing unequal power, privilege and social prestige" (Dei, 1996, p. 41). At the minimum, we should acknowledge that to those who are racialized, racism feels real (Lopes & Thomas, 2006). While the dominant discourses on racism have focused primarily on overt behavior (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004), the new form of racism is covert and apparently race neutral or color blind, thus making it ever more difficult to challenge (Revilla, 2004) and often difficult to measure. Organizational racism is an even bigger challenge because, on the one hand, we have equity programs, which give us the illusion that organizations are equitable and non-racist, but, on the other hand, a closer examination reveals that such policies merely mask the same old inertia and reluctance to really tackle racism (Lopes & Thomas, 2006).

I view racism on a continuum of other social ills such as stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination and realize that we cannot discuss one and neglect the others. I am cognizant that racialized workers are subjected to multiple oppressions along the lines of gender, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation, in all facets of their lives. Furthermore, racialized workers are not all alike; hence, we need to study different groups: the poor, women, disabled, and people of various faiths – and the ways in which they are included/excluded in the workplace. In

addition, it is my contention that schools propagate Western Eurocentric ideology via the hidden curriculum (Dei, 1997; Revilla, 1994). Race knowledge and racism are learned in schools, from media, everyday interactions, and then simply "spill" over into workplaces.

It is noteworthy that as a social activist and anti-racism workshop presenter, I am inclined to gravitate toward books that provide practical tools and exercises that guide discussions around racism. *Dancing on Live Embers: Challenging Racism in Organizations* by Tina Lopes and Barb Thomas (2006) is such a book and it investigates how racism, White privilege, and power function in the ordinary daily activities of organizational life. This book targets wide audiences: human resource personal, union workers/leaders, employers, visible minority and White workers, basically anyone interested in instituting anti-racism practices in organizations. The message of the book is simple – racism in an organization is everyone's responsibility.

I am cognizant of the fact that racism is not limited to Caucasians[11] discriminating against members of visible minorities. In fact, there are tensions within ethnic communities and "people of color" – an area worth investigating further. However, based on my lived and professional experience it is mostly White employers and employees who discriminate against "people of color[12]".

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[11] Constituting, or characteristic of a race of humankind native to Europe, North Africa, and southwest Asia and classified according to physical features —used especially in referring to persons of European descent having usually light skin pigmentation.

[12] Although this may be my experience, it is not entirely true for everyone. There is also "reverse discrimination" and discrimination that occurs amongst various ethnic groups.

One possible explanation is that White employers have high representation in supervisory, managerial and decision-making positions. Ironically, the ARWI study which examines employer's perceptions of racism in organization, confirms my inclinations in that all participants were White Euro-Canadians.

Historical Roots of "race" and Contemporary Racism

Race as a description of physical condition probably dates back to antiquity; however, most scholars agree that it is "primarily through colonialism in the 16th to the 19th century that the front and center position of 'race' as a physical descriptor emerged" (Henry, 2004, p. 4). In other words, it was establishment by White Europeans from developed countries such Spain, Portugal, Britain, France and the Netherlands which dominated over areas of Asia, Africa, Australia and Latin America. Arguably, the first European contact with "people of color" marked the beginning concept of "racism" as a dominant fact in western society[13]. Different mechanisms of enforcement were utilized, such as the Christian doctrines, scientific concepts and anthropology to define colonized populations as inferior human beings. Differences such as culture, dress, dinner and dance practices were emphasized. Hence, the concept of "others" as not being White was created. Colonial ideology was rapidly disseminated through Europe and other Europeanized areas such as North

[13] Racism occurred in other societies for example Chinese reference to non-Chinese as "barbarians" etc. See: Boye Lafayette De Mente (2000).

America thereby spreading the doctrines of alleged racial inferiority (Henry, 2004, p. 4).

As an educator, social activist, and a colonized member of White society I am inclined to accept the notion that the first European contact with "people of color" marked the origin of the concept of "race" as a dominant fact in Western Society. The concept of "others" as not being White was created at that point. Likewise, I am naturally drawn to the works of post-colonial writers such as Edward Said and the concept of "Orientalism." Although it is difficult to capture this term in its entirety, for our purposes it is fair to state that "Orientalism" is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and "the Occident" (Said 1994, p. 2). In other words, east and west is in mutual and perfect opposition: the West being civilized, rational and productive, and the East being dark, primitive, irrational and lazy.

The East is associated with "people of color" and the west is primarily "light skinned/White people." This dichotomy justifies colonization and defines its disciplinary goals – "civilization" of the orient – but also sets its limits: the colonized can never be truly "occidentalized", both by definition and because of Orientalism's structural importance for western self-definition[14].

Definition(s) of Racism

[14] "East is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet." See works by Rudyard Kipling.

Rather than dwelling on the historical factors of the origins and shifting boundaries of "race" in colonial and post-colonial situations (Back & Solomos, 2000), it may be best to enter into a discussion by providing a basic definition. Lopes & Thomas (2006) define race as a "social category used to classify humankind by physical features such as skin colour, hair texture, facial characteristics, or stature" (p, 269). The authors suggest that "there is, in fact, more genetic variation within a single "race" than there is between two different "races." Despite the fact that there is no scientific or biological basis to the term "race", ideas about racial difference continue to thrive. Whatever "race" was in its origins, "it is now an intrinsic part and fundamental principle of social organization and identity formation" (ibid). Following from this definition, "race" is no longer conceived as a biological, genetically determined concept. However, "race" continues to remain a biological reality for "people of color," that leads to perception of difference, which then leads to racism (Henry, 2004, p, 4). When we discuss "race", then racism also needs to be defined.

Different Forms of "racism"

A thesis intended to explore equity policy and contestation of "race" and racism must provide a clear definition to the reader. I have selected works by Tina Lopes and Barb Thomas, who describe racism in Canada as:

> those aspects of Canadian society that overtly and covertly attribute value and normality to White people and Whiteness, and that devalue, stereotype, and label racialized communities as 'others,' different, less than, or render them invisible. Individual racism can be unconscious or

> conscious, active or passive. Institutional racism is a network of institutional structures, policies and practices that creates advantages for White people and discrimination, oppression and disadvantage for racialized people. Systemic racism [is] conscious or un-conscious policies, procedures and practices that exclude, marginalize and exploit racialized people. Systemic racism is supported by institutional power and by powerful (often unexamined) ideas, which make racism look normal and justified. Systemic racism allows individuals to practice racism in organizations, unchecked by effective complaints procedures, performance appraisals and promotions which require equity competencies (2006, p. 270).

A legal definition of racism in the Canadian context (Employment Equity, Alberta Human Rights Citizenship and Multicultural Act) defines the negative valuing, stereotyping, and discriminatory treatment of individuals and groups on the basis of their race. Frances Henry and Carol Tator in their excellent book *The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canadian Society* (2002) indicate that racism is manifested in three different manners: individual, institutional/systemic and cultural/ideological. Individual racism includes attitudes and everyday behavior. Institutional/systemic manifestations include policies and practices of an organization; basically, these are rules which are woven into a social system. The cultural/ideological form of racism refers to values embedded in the dominant culture.

Lopes and Thomas (2006) extend the definitions further by suggesting that individual racism can be unconscious or conscious, active and passive. In terms of institutional racism, they argue that the institutional structures, polices and practices create advantages for White people and discriminate, oppress and disadvantage the racialized people. Systemic racism again can be "conscious or

unconscious policies, procedures and practices that exclude, marginalize and exploit racialized people. Systemic racism is supported by institutional power and powerful (often unexamined) ideas, which make racism look normal and justified. Systemic racism allows individuals to practice racism in organizations, unchecked by effective complaints procedures, performance appraisals, and promotions which require equity competencies" (p, 270). It is important to note that intent is not a necessary ingredient to determine grounds for discrimination and racism. In fact, if policies and practices have an indirect effect (Adverse Effect), then they are considered discriminatory. Having defined "race" and models of racism, a definition of the concept of "other" is much warranted.

Ideological Theories and Concept of the "other"

Racism is best understood by theorizing about "difference" and "othering." In fact:

> the construction of difference and "othering" combined with the process of assigning value to difference are central to the understanding not only of racism, but many other forms of oppressive beliefs (Rothenberg, in Harris: 1998: 281).

Be it biology, social construction, skin colour, morality and ethics, culture, values and norms, construction of difference generally leads to common stereotypes, prejudice and ultimately racism (Henry, 2004). How are the concepts created and maintained? Edward Said in his prominent book, *Orientalism* (1979) describes "Othering" as a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the 'West' and 'East.'

Be it a scientific method or an anthropological inquiry, Eastern peoples are defined as primitive, as having simple cultures. The West is the epitome of advanced/civilized societies. The East is dark and dirty, while the West is clean and pure. The relationship between East and West is dialectical; for example, "others" or colored peoples help define White Europeans. The "others" allow White Europeans to dominate, and have authority over them. The notion of "othering" helps form the European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. Most importantly, "othering" or concept of difference is conscious, deliberate and political. In other words, *a willed human work.*

Based on these tenants, one can make the following assumption:

> the notion of 'difference' is socially constructed and it challenges the erroneous belief in what has been called 'essentialism' – namely the differences in the human species are natural, biological, immutable, and that they form the essential nature of various groups (Henry, 2004, p. 5).

Irrespective of which lens one selects to view the concept of "othering"– be it biology or social construction - it ultimately leads to "distancing of what is peripheral, marginal and incidental from a cultural norm…" (Pickering in Henry, 2004).

The process of "othering" is also a denial of history; it presents a barrier to change and can be understood as a myth. Marginalizing others places them out of the bounds of mainstream history; it mythologizes them as culturally, intellectually and morally inferior and so robs millions of people of their identities and their very personhood. [Hence, the new form of racism] is based on an

ideological construction of difference and "othering." In combination with prevailing dominant white hegemonic power[15], racism becomes a commanding strategy for maintaining asymmetrical power relations or the status quo[16] (Henry, 2004).

The Role of Representation

While modern societies appear to cater to the ideal of human rights, equity, equality and justice, they continue to practice the politics of difference and maintain 'othering' (Razack, 1998). How is that possible? Stuart (1997) suggests that it is via representation and meaning, which he refers to as systems of representation:

> systems of representation are the cultural circuits through which meanings are transmitted. The practice of representation means to embody concepts, ideas and emotions in a symbolic form that can be transmitted and meaningfully interpreted.... systems of representations include the media in all forms; especially television and the print media, films, and videos, music, lyrics, museum exhibitions and in fact in all areas of society characterized by 'text and talk' (Hall, in Henry, 2004, p. 6).

In the North American context:

> [w]hite people, their attitudes and behavior are represented as normal and natural whereas people of colour and other disadvantaged groups are often represented in negative and even hostile ways. Thus, in all forms of representation, whiteness is normative whereas blackness is marginalized and 'othered.' Racialized ideologies and representations are reflected in the collective belief system of the predominantly white hegemonic culture; they are woven into the laws, language, rules, norms and values of Canadian society (Goldberg et al in Henry, 2004, p. 6).

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[15] The processes by which a dominant culture maintains its dominant position: for example, the use of institutions to formalize power; the employment of a bureaucracy to make power seem abstract (and, therefore, not attached to any one individual).

[16] Provided the power relationship is asymmetrical.

Critical Race Theory, White Privilege & Power

It is evident from the preceding discussion that examining and deconstructing concepts such as "race" and racism is not only imperative but requires a variety of theories and methods. Critical Race Theory (CRT), which began as a movement in the law, attempts to both study and transform the relationship between race, racism, and power (Delgado, 2001). CRT is a school of sociological thought that emphasizes the socially constructed nature of "race." Contemporary critical race theorists such as Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda and George Dei have much to contribute to the topic. A unique feature of the theory is its inductive nature, where the practice of law has guided the theory. The activist approach of CRT is useful in addressing social injustices. For example CRT not only "sets out to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better" (p. 3).

> [CRT] considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law (ibid, p. 3).

Flowing from these theories is the notion of White privilege and power. This term has been used historically to identify the privileges, opportunities, and guarantees offered by White societies to anyone who is Caucasian[17]. It also

[17] Granted not all Caucasians have the same privileges. White societies are also stratified.

alludes to unearned priviledge based on having a light skin color and Euro-Canadian heritage. The unearned privilege leads to better housing, education, economic opportunities, and higher wages for Caucasians/or White peoples (Mastuda, 1996). Critical feminist theorists such as Agnes Calliste, Carol Schick, Verma St. Denis, Aida Hurtado and Abigail Stewart build on critical race theories further by suggesting that there is an intersection between "race", gender and social class. Although, much of their work focuses on the educational institution and/or curriculum planning, I believe that their thesis of solidarity and a code of silence by White people lends itself to a study of the denial of racism. Hence a brief discussion is much warranted.

Although a comprehensive discussion around the development and the contemporary debate about this topic is worth exploring, it is beyond the scope of this study. For our purposes, I refer to Peggy McIntosh's work in which she suggests that White people (having a light skin color and European heritage) hold certain unearned privileges (McIntosh, 1990). By examining her own social location, and daily routines, she lists 46 ways in which she experiences daily conditions of unearned advantages in contrast to colleagues of color. The importance of this approach to understanding privilege is that White people are completely unaware of privilege as it operates in their daily lives. In fact, when approached, most White people refute and challenge the notion and question "What privilege?"

The author sees White privilege as an "invisible knapsack" Inside the knapsack are special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tolls and blank cheques which White people can count on cashing each day. One possible reason for the failure to see privilege is possibly that by describing privileges, White people will be held accountable. Secondly, denial of privileges "preserve[s] the myths of moral and managerial meritocracy and the belief that democracy is working as it should" (ibid, p. 4). This explanation seems to suggest collusion on the part of the privileged, or at bare minimum that someone is a perpetrator or perhaps it's a group. McIntosh makes statements such as "I was taught not to see" and "kept most blinded at schools." These phrases suggest agency, and that the teachers are either intentionally omitting discussion around White privilege, or that this neglect is due to a lack of awareness on the part of teachers, curriculum planners and school administrators.

Canadian Context

The impact of colonialism and imperialism (informal mechanisms of control) is extensively researched and scrutinized by post-colonial, anti-colonial and critical race theorists (see Razack, 1998; Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1963). It is important to note that the significant presence of discrimination and racism toward "others" or "people of color" in Canadian workplaces (Thomas & Lopes, 2006) is not suspended in mid-air, but is in fact a continuation of the colonial past. Hence, in examining

> contemporary social relations between various racial, ethnic and cultural groups, the principles of historical specificity cannot be overlooked – a principle which attempts to understand the conditions under which non-British and non-French groups have been treated over time and the structural constraints under which [non-whites] have to live (Chana, 2002, p. 11).

The shift from an all white settler-colony to a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multicultural nation with corresponding legislation (to readdress the past wrongs) has not been without challenges and contestation. While it is tempting to discuss the roots of colonization and to deconstruct Canada's discourse of immigration and integration[18], it is beyond the scope of this study. However, a brief discussion of Canada's immigration policy indicates that Canada's colonial foundation and legacy is primarily racist in laws, policies and practices (Henry, 2004). For example, Canada has acquired labour for expansion and building infrastructure since its inception. Aboriginal, black, East Indians slavery and exploitation of Chinese labour are part of Canadian legacy and are difficult to refute (Li, 1996). Hence, a brief discussion about Canada's immigration policy is vital.

For decades after Confederation, labour shortages remained on the national agenda; therefore, the two-charter groups – the English and the French - allocated funds and resources to attracting immigrants. However, the initial legislation and immigration polices were designed to encourage primarily Americans and White Europeans (CIC, 2006). Only when labour was not secured

[18] For an in-depth discussion of international colonialism, in particular, the historical and contemporary forms of racism in the Canadian context see Peter Li, 2004.

from within Canada or from other White European countries, were, "people of color" imported (Abu Laban, 1998; Chana, 2002). Upon completion of the project, the policy makers expected the laborers to leave Canada. The legacy of this period includes blatant racist policies such as the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 and the Continuous Passage Act that were intended to prohibit entry of Chinese and East Indian Immigrants. Both of these restricted access to Canada by means of a head tax or through policies of isolation excluding immigrants (as the case of Japanese immigrants post World War II) (Li, 1996). White Euro-Canadians insisted on keeping "others" out of "their country."

However, starting in the mid 1940s, with the decline in European immigration, there were considerable changes in immigration patterns, leading to a substantial shift in the 1980's where the majority of immigrants starting arriving from non-source countries such as Hong Kong and India (CIC, 2006) resulting in significant changes from demographic, social and cultural standpoints (Lizotte, 1997, p.1). Subsequently, Canada became increasingly a multicultural society with corresponding multicultural policies.

Neo-Liberal Policies of Inclusion and Equity

The shift from blatant racist policies and practices toward marginalized groups to one of respecting differences was due to several factors. Rather than providing a socio-political, historical rendition, I will highlight key protective legislation such as the Canadian Human Rights, the Multiculturalism Act and the

Employment Equity Act (EEA). Starting in 1948, the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[19] stated that dignity and equal and inalienable rights, were the birthright of every person throughout the world. The two covenants that followed the universal Declaration outlined the specific civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of individuals. Together these make up the International Bill of Rights. Soon, Canada followed suit and adopted several pieces of human rights legislation, including the Canadian Human Rights Act in 1978.

The Canadian Human Rights Act originally was passed by the Government of Canada in 1977 with the express goal of extending the law to ensure equal opportunity to individuals who may be victims of discriminatory practices. The basis was a set of prohibited grounds of discrimination such as gender, disability, or religion (Department of Justice, 2006). The Declaration and the Act state that:

> all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

The Canadian Human Rights Act (1977) extends the universal declaration by suggesting that:

> everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (p. 5).

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[19] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Act was signed on December 10, 1948 and ratified in Canada in 1977.

This H.R. act also led to the creation of the Canadian Human Rights Commission whose role is to ensure that all individuals:

> have equal opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have...without being hindered or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability or conviction of an offense for which a pardon has been granted (Canadian Human Rights, 1997, p. 5).

The Civil Rights movement and other international events certainly laid the foundation for exposing social injustices and by advocating for human rights legislation. However, creation of the Canadian Human Rights Act was not a linear process but is rather a result of a series of events. Starting in the mid 1960's, most Canadian jurisdictions adopted new employment statues, which prohibited racial and religious discriminaion and prescribed equal pay for men and women. Also during 1960s, a major precedent was established: Canadian Bill of Rights and concept of equal opportunity (a term used to define equality in employment for all Canadians). The policy behind and the usage of the term "equal opportunity" was based on the notion that if certain barriers such as discrimination in employment were eliminated, all Canadians would have equal access to equal employment opportunities.

However, despite the fervor and commitment of the Federal government, it appears that the equal oppportunity programs did not result in any significant redistribution in employment. Disadvantaged groups continued to exist in the Canadian workforce (CIC, 2006). Therefore, in the 1970's, with the women's movment as the backdrop, both women and minority groups exerted pressure on

the federal, provincial and municipal governments to establish special programs to improve the employment situation of these groups. Likewise, by the mid 1970's Human Rights Commissions were established in all provinces, and Parliament enacted the Canadian Human Rights Act. Although there were (and remain) variations between provinces, these policies are mainly designed to protect on the following grounds: race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, marital status, family status, disability and conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted. Sexual orientation was added to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination in 1996.

A major proclamation was the 1971 Multicultural policy (legislative passing of the Multicultural Act in 1988). The term "multiculturalism" is often debated and holds different meanings to different peoples (Lizotte, 1997). Moreover, the term needs to be understood from both an historical and a conceptual perspective. However, the official Canadian definition of Multiculturalism states that:

> it is a fundamental belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination and violence. Through multiculturalism, Canada recognizes the potential of all Canadians, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs (Canadian Heritage, 2007).

The Federal government's commitment to protective legislation was once again evident with a slight variation in 1978, when the federal government launched a voluntary Affirmative Action Program targetting mainly private industry. A year later, in 1979, Federal contractors and Crown corporations were included and the program was administered primarily through the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. The voluntary Affirmitive Action program targeted groups such as Aboriginal peoples, Blacks in Nova Scotia, persons with disabilities, and women. In addition, starting in the 1980s another pilot Affirmative Action Program was established in three federal government departments (Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, Secretary of State and Treasury Board Secretariat).

Starting in 1983, this initiative was extended to all departments within the federal public service. This time the target groups were Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and women. It is noteworthy that these voluntary affirmative action programs did not yield positive results. In other words, there were no significant changes in employment representation for disadvantaged group members. Hence, in 1983, the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment was established to address this lack of progress. The Commission was instructed to "explore the most efficient, effective and equitable means of promoting equality in employment" for the four designated groups: women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and visible minority persons.

Another initiative undertaken by the federal government to futher the goals of the above declaration is the adoption of an official Mulitculturalism Policy. While "multiculturalism is understood differently by various peoples, groups, scholars and researchers" (Lizotte, 1997, p. 6), I will only attempt to summarize the three main perspectives: conservative, liberal and critical multiculturalism.

According to McLaren (1995), *conservative multiculturalism* has its roots in colonial, imperialist and White supremacist ideology. Minorites are percieved as "different" from the mainstream majority, hence are "culturally inferior" to the Euro-Canadians. Social injustices and imbalances are justified based on the "natural order" and the status quo is protected. The emphasis is on promoting a "common culture" (based on Euro-Canadian heritage) and "linguistic hegemony" (English or French) (Mclaran 1995, emphasis added).

On the other hand *liberal multiculturalism* believes in the natural equality of all human beings. They support "meritocracy" in which success is based on effort. Although supporters of this perspective accept that there is economic, social and political inequailty, they do not attribute this to cultural deprivation but rather to an inequality in social and educational opportunities. Likewise, liberal policies tend to focus primarily on spending funds on social programs and access to post-secondary education.

In contrast, *critical multiculturalism* believes in a total transformation of the "social, cultural and institutional relations in which meanings are generated"

(McLaren, 1995, p. 37). *Critical multiculturalism* believes that the idea of a "common culture" is a defense simply to maintain the status quo for those already in power. Proponents of this perspective question the rights of those who currently hold power and privilege.

Whereas the Canadian Human Rights Act postulates that all men and women are equal, the conservative Multiculturalism views human beings as "different", hence unequal. Proponents of liberal Multiculturalism rectify this problem by creating an equity policy. The Employment Equity Act recognizes past wrongs and acknowleges inequity in Canadian society, in particular in the workplace. The purpose of the EEA is to:

> achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfillment of the goals to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and visible minority people by giving effect to the principle special measures and accommodation of difference (HRSDC, 2007).

It is worth noting that the Employment Equity Act led to the implementation of certain diversity and anti-racism management practices across Canada. Essentially, it was believed that anti-racist education shares a platform and principles with human rights declarations and education. The anti-racist educator asserts that the unequal distribution of power is a central factor which needs to be addressed through anti-racism education. Anti-racist education is open to multiple interpretations. Simply stated, it is an educational approach that seeks to challenge inequalities. In addition to celebrating culture and difference (i.e.

multicultural education) it examines issues of power, justice and inequality and challenges racist attitudes, beliefs and behavior.

Formation of the Employment Equity Act

In 1984 Judge Rosalie Abella released the Commission's report and coined the term Employment Equity to describe the Canadian approach to dealing with employment disadvantage. She suggested that:

> it is not that individuals in the designated groups are inherently unable to achieve equality on their own, it is that the obstacles in their way are so formidable and self-perpetuating that they cannot be overcome without intervention. It is both intolerable and insensitive if we simply wait and hope that the barriers will disappear with time. Equality in employment will not happen unless we make it happen (Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, 1984, p. 2).

The report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment (1984) encompasses a range of measures designed to achieve equality in work places so that no person is denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability. In June of 1985, the federal government responded to the Commission's report by introducing Bill 62: a Bill with respect to Employment Equity.

The objective of this historical precedent and current model of the Employment Equity Act is to create and maintain a workforce that is representative of the demographic mix in the appropriate recruitment area or applicant pool for the occupation. In her report, Abella identified four "designated" groups as the focus of employment equity measures: women,

Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and persons who are (because of their race or colour) in a visible minority in Canada. These groups are targeted for special attention because their labour-market experience reveals long-standing patterns of high unemployment, lower than average rates of pay and concentration in lower status jobs with limited opportunities for advancement.

Another major precedent set forth in the same year was the introduction of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*[20], which further solidified the idea of workplace equality. Notably, the combination of these legislations provides protection against discrimination and makes a provision for special affirmative action programs. Furthermore, they acknowledge that equality requires conditions of disadvantage to be addressed. This also shatters myths about equity; for example, the argument that employment equity is "reverse discrimination" is not legally valid. In fact, Employment equity does not target individuals or groups for exclusion, as does discrimination; rather, employment equity seeks to include groups that are proven to have been excluded in the past.

In 1986 The Employment Equity Act was passed. Its purpose was to:

> achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfillment of the goals, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and visible minority people by giving effect to the principle that employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences (p. 3).

[20] This Act is not in force on Aboriginal reserves.

It is important to note that the Legislated Employment Equity Program (LEEP) did not become fully operational until 1988. Employers were given two years to set up their employment equity processes. In addition, the Federal Contractors Program (FCP) became fully operational in 1988 and was established by government policy, not legislation. The second Employment Equity Act received royal assent in 1995 and came into force on October 24, 1996. Built on the framework provided by the earlier legislation, it focuses on clarifying and enforcing the employer obligations in the Act. The Act covers private sector employers under federal jurisdiction as well as almost all employees of the federal government. Some of the major changes under the Act were as follows: the Canadian Human Rights Commission was given the authority to audit all federally regulated employers' employment equity processes; all federal departments fall under the Employment Equity Act (they do not report to HRDC); and one added responsility for the Federal Contractors Program was a five year review.

Overview of Employment Equity and Federal Contract Program

As mentioned earlier, the goal of Employment Equity is equal access to employment opportunities for all employees by ensuring that no person is denied employment opportunities for reasons unrelated to ability or qualifications, such as gender, racial origin or physical disabilty (Employment Equity Act, 1986). The Legislated Employment Equity Program (LEEP) covers federally regulated

employers that fall under the Employment Equity Act. Every year by June 1st, over 400 employers are required to submit employment equity reports showing the representation of the designated groups within their workforce (HRSDC, 2006a). The Employer Reports and Analysis Unit receives these reports and verifies them for compliance with the reporting requirements. The individual reports are published, and they are also the basis for the Minister of Labour's Annual Report on the Employment Equity Act.

The Federal Contractors Program was designed to ensure that organizations wishing to bid on contracts with the Federal Governement must have a fair and representative workforce. One of the key aspects of this program is the development of a mandatory Employment Equity Plan to identify and remove barriers to employment faced by four designated groups: Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, visible minorities and womern (EEA, 1986). What is the definition of *Aboriginal people, visible minoritiy and people with disability?*

- Aboriginal people of Canada include individuals who identify themselves as Status Indians, Non-Status Indians, Inuit, or Metis.
- Visible minority are persons who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.
- Persons with disabilities are persons who consider themselves to be, or believe that an employer or a potential employer would likely to consider them to be, disadvantaged in employment by reason of any persistent physical, mental, psychiatric, sensory or learning impairment (EEA, 1986).

It is also noteworthy that both the Legislated Employment Equity and the Federal Contractors Program are obligated to identify and remove barriers to

employment for the four designated groups. Below is a brief breakdown of the Federal Contractors Program and eleven program criteria for implementation (HRSDC, 2006a).

1. Communications of Employment Equity to employees – organizations are expected to make formal commitment to EE. Ideally, CEO and senior management should take the lead for the communication strategy.
2. Assignment of senior official to be responsible for EE – someone who facilitate consultation with unions and employee representatives and ensure that all ten criteria are met. The senior official also ensures that senior officials commit time, money and human resource to sustain EE.
3. Collection of workforce information via self-identified questionnaire to all employees.
4. Workforce analysis – internal representation (stock data) compared to external census date (representation of designated groups)
5. Employment Systems Review – intensive review of formal and informal employment systems policies and practices.
6. Establishment of goals – based on items 3 and 4.
7. Development of an Employment Equity plan – based on goals and workforce analysis.
8. Adoption of special measures and reasonable accommodation.
9. Establishment of favorable work environment
10. Adoption of monitoring procedures – workforce profile
11. Authorization to enter premises – permit Workplace Equity Officers from HRSDC-Labour access to facilities and to document related to organization employment equity program.

The significance of the above criteria will be explored in Chapter four and five.

Summary

This chapter provides an overview to the theoretical background and conceptual framework for this study. The historical roots of "race" are reviewed and definitions and models of racism are provided. Contemporary theories of racism that highlighted ideological notions of the "other", the role of "difference" and "othering" concepts that are derived from Post-Colonial theories are

described. Related to this subject are two concepts: Critical Race Theory and White Privilege and Power, and these are also explored. Neo-Liberal policies of inclusion and equity in the Canadian Context are examined. Protected policies such as the Canadian Human Rights Act, Multi-culturalism and Employment Equity are also reviewed.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

Documentary analysis is utilized in this study to address the general and related questions stated in the introductory chapter. The study is qualitative in nature and grounded in Hermeneutic traditions. I draw particularly on the principles, methods and objectives of content analysis. This chapter also provides a brief description of the documents selected, methods, and the rationale for the selection. The epistemology, ontology and a relevant research paradigm will be examined first.

Research Paradigm

Miyou (2004) suggests that a research paradigm is a way of looking at the world that guides and directs the researcher's choice of method as well as their ontological and epistemological positions. She suggests that it is desirable that the:

> researchers clearly situate themselves and that their research paradigms be made clear at the on-set because their personal assumptions, attitudes and beliefs inevitably have important consequences for the practical conduct of inquiry, as well as for the interpretations of findings (Miyou, 2004, p. 209).

The emergence of this thesis is in part due to my own subjective knowledge gained from growing up as a non-White person in Canada and experiencing

racism directly. I study racism from the perspective of a racialized/visible minority woman/worker, and I have a vested interest.

Johnson and Christiansen (2000) encourage qualitative researchers to study a phenomenon in an open-ended way and develop hypotheses and theoretical explanations based on their interpretations of what they observe. Likewise, this approach has indeed been most fruitful in this context. Since, I have both lived with, and researched, racism in the workplace, I am familiar with equity policies and pragmatism, and I formed my hypotheses based on those lived experiences. Hence, this study tests those preliminary linkages against experiential data (Lee, 1994).

I served as a co-researcher on the Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative – a project that examined perceptions of racism and equity policy. Hence, I have tacit knowledge, and I am both an "insider" and an "outsider." While the project certainly provided invaluable information and the impetus to critically examine anti-racism policy and pragmatism, one of the biggest challenges was to shift from being a practitioner to the role of an academic.

Although I am aware that subjectivity is an integral part of qualitative research (Lee, 1994), every effort is made to follow the guidelines of content analysis, critical post-colonial theories along with critical race theories and theories of white privilege and power guide my analysis. Finally, it is worth mentioning that I view policy documents including equity policies as living documents that constantly evolve and must have practical application rather than simply being

shelved for reference purposes. Therefore, while reading the documents, I continually asked the following questions:

1) What is the underlying theme of the document?
2) What does the policy/study not say?
3) Which Act/Legislation does the document draw from?
4) How will the policy be interpreted?
5) What are the ramifications of the policy in the workplace?

Balancing the Paradoxes

Both quantitative and qualitative research have their merits; however, it has been a challenge for me to embrace Western paradigms of research and knowledge from the position of a racialized and "colonized" South Asian woman. In fact, the prescribed or traditional Western research process, including methods of inquiry, is an alien concept. Be it qualitative or quantitative modes of inquiry, it is in contrast to my preferred styled of "oral story telling." My preconceptions are confirmed by authors such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, an indigenous scholar who calls for a "decolonization of methodology" which is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations, and values that inform research practices (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 p. 1).

T. Smith (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), in reference to the Maori peoples and indigenous knowledge, suggests that:

> the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism...the words in the indigenous world's vocabulary...it is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism and the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples are collected, classified and then represented back to the West (p.1).

Although it is tempting to investigate and explore non-Western research agendas, methodologies and protocols, for our purposes, suffice it to say that document analysis grounded in Hermeneutic tradition is the closest match I can find to what Tuhiwai Smith refers to as "decolonization of methodology."

Figure 1: The following table is a brief summary of methodology:

Theoretical Position	Post-Colonial Theory, Critical Race Theory and White Privilege and Power
Methods of Data Collection	Collection of policy documents, reports and articles
Method of interpretation	Qualitative Content Analysis (Thematic Content Analysis) Hermeneutic Tradition and Procedure

I have selected the following documents in an attempt to answer the thesis questions:

1. Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative (HRSDC, 2006b)

2. Racism-Free Workplace Strategy (HRSDC, 2006a)

3. The Employment Equity Act (Department of Justice, 1988)

4. Ten Years of Experience: A Background Issues Paper on the Employment Equity Act and Federal Contractors Program in Preparation for the Parliamentary review (Government of Canada, 2006)

5. Racial Status and Employment Outcomes (Cheung, 2005)

I chose the Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative primarily because it serves as a perfect case study to answer the thesis questions. The study is funded by the federal government and facilitated by both an educational institution and civil society. Racism-Free Workplace Strategy is a policy document, which draws predominantly on the Employment Equity Act of 1988. The remaining documents provide statistics in terms of employment outcomes and identify gaps of equity programs. All documents are contemporary and speak to policy and pragmatism.

Concerning the timelines of the research, the primary document, Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative was based on work completed between January and March 2006. The rest of the documents are also contemporary and were obtained via the Internet between January 2006 and October 2007. It is important to note that a relatively limited timeline is one of the reasons why the study focuses primarily on data that has been documented and is available relatively easily via the Internet.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Despite uncertainties and challenges, I settled for qualitative research methodology simply because it does not have fixed, standardized and rigid rules. In other words it is flexible (although there are general guidelines in qualitative research) (Lee, 1994). Qualitative research is about understanding versus predicting outcomes (Lee, 1994). In other words, my task was to understand the

disconnect between policy and practice, and the refutation of the existence of racism in workplaces by White employers, not necessarily prove cause and effect (Flick et. al, 2005). Although there are numerous attributes associated with qualitative methodology, I was drawn to principles such as "high regard for humanistic virtues of the subjective, interpretative approach to the study of human group life" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 p. 2). I concur with basic underlying principles of qualitative research such as:

> social reality is understood as a shared product and attribution of meanings. Objective life circumstances are made relevant to a life world through subjective meaning [and] the communicative nature of social reality permits the reconstruction of construction of social reality become the starting point for research. Most importantly, qualitative research relies on the investigator's subjective perception as one component of the evidence (Flick et al, 2005 p. 282).

In other words, my task is to first understand the phenomena under investigation through the pre-conditions and method of my understanding, to appreciate that the documents I select and analyze are grounded in my understanding of racism in the workplace, policy and practice. Another undertaking is to reduce the data into meaningful constructs (Sarantakos 2005, p. 283) and "re-construct" meaning, challenge taken for granted reality, and demystify the social construct.

Basically, qualitative research proposes that there is no single reality, method or worldview. In fact subjectivity is imbedded in data collection, analysis and interpretation. Experiences do not have meaning unless there is subjective consciousness that gives meaning (Flick et al, 2005). Similarly, I am part

observer, part practitioner and part academic who does not claim to follow strict standardized, objective methods and normative concepts as prescribed by traditional quantitative researchers. I collect the data with openness, observe with openness, and rely on text as a medium for my work. Moreover, as a qualitative researcher I am aware that my interpretation and analysis are guided by my past history, knowledge and experiences.

Qualitative research has a strong applied orientation in the questions it addresses and in its procedural methods. I am particularly drawn to its claims to describe a life-world from the "the inside out,' from the point of view of the people who participate (Flick et. al, 2004, p. 3) or those who may experience the phenomena directly. It allows for a personal voice and it does not force the researcher to remove them from the research process. By describing the experiences (including the researcher's) it seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to the process, meaning patterns and structural features.

Furthermore, qualitative research:

> with its precise and 'thick' descriptions does not simply depict reality nor does it practice 'exoticism' for its own sake, rather makes use of the unusual or the deviant and unexpected as a source of insight and a mirror whose reflection makes the unknown perceptible in the unknown, thereby opening up further possibilities for self (Flick et. al, 2005, p. 5).

Personal observations, personal notes, and other sources are all part of the process. Qualitative research in its approach to the phenomena under investigation is frequently more open and thereby more involved than other research strategies that work with large quantities. Moreover, in qualitative research, practitioners collecting, analyzing data and interpreting the results are bound to a considerable extent by the notion of contextuality (Flick, ibid). Hence, I have taken into consideration that texts do not speak for themselves; they have to be read as texts, and they are then read and interpreted in a particular context. Likewise, the policy documents, reports and literature I read for this study are written for a particular audience (government officials, private and public employers) and they are grounded in my understanding. Certainly, my orientation (Post-Colonial Theory, Critical Race Theory, White Privilege and Power) influenced how I read the non-linguistic documents.

While it is not my intention to define the field of qualitative research or review the history of qualitative research in the human disciplines, it is worth noting that no method is without its limitations. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) cite many scholars who have charted the painful history of qualitative research and they forewarn its users that qualitative research in many, if not all, of its forms (observation, participation, interviewing, ethnography) serves as a metaphor for colonial knowledge, for power and for truth. The metaphor works this way:

> Research, quantitative and qualitative, is scientific. Research provides the foundation for reports about the representation of 'the Other.' In the colonial context, research becomes an objective way of representing the dark-skinned Other to the white world (p.2).

And although:

> qualitative researchers are trying to understand 'the Other' the other is often exotocized and the 'exotic other' is then depicted as a 'primitive, non-white person from a foreign culture judged to be less civilized than ours. Therefore, one can conclude that qualitative research and its commitment to 'understand' from the very beginning was implicated in a racist project (p. 2).

Since qualitative research is grounded in the local context in which the phenomena of interest occur; generalization of empirical results to other situations or settings can be problematic.

Again, given the options available to novice scholars such as myself, I have selected document analysis, in particular content/thematic analysis grounded in Hermeneutic tradition, which is the closest match to the "decolonization of methodology" proposed by Tuhiwai Smith cited at the beginning of this chapter.

Two Specific Qualitative Methods

The selection of the methods was carefully made considering the nature of the research questions and the relevance to the purpose of the research. The most common source of data was textual/written documents that were either archived or obtained from the Internet websites. The official statistics were obtained primarily from Statistics Canada, Human Resource Social Development Canada and related government websites. Moreover, I have elected to review only contemporary public documents (with the exception of the Employment Equity

Act, 1988) and I gained access to most documents via secondary channels such as reference databases at the University of Alberta library and the official websites.

Documents are understood here as written texts that serve as record or piece of evidence of an event or fact (Flick et al, 2005 p. 283). For this study, I examined policy documents, public and private reports that were produced by civil societies, provincial and federal bodies. In other words, I have relied mostly on primary documents, which are supplemented by a few secondary sources.

In terms of this project, every effort is made to ensure that it is both reliable and valid. Thomas Lee (1999) provides both a technical and a simple meaning of reliability. Interpretation of reliability refers to "consistency and stability of results or "scores." Consistency is most often thought to mean repeatability" (p. 146-147). I find Sarantakos's (2005) definition to be much more precise and appealing. He suggests that reliability refers to the capacity of measurement to produce consistent results. "Reliability is equivalent to consistency. Thus a method is reliable if it produces the same results whenever it is repeated" (p. 83).

Having described reliability, another critical component in research is validity. "Validity is a shared "true" variance between an underlying concept and its empirical scores" (Lee, 1994 p. 146). Again there are multiple meanings and concepts and once again I am drawn to Sarantakos' (2005) definition because of simplicity:

> validity is a measure of precision, accuracy and relevance. It refers to the ability to produce findings that are in agreement with theoretical or

> conceptual values. Finally, do the instruments/indicators measure what they are supposed to measure? (p. 83)

I also had to take into consideration that documents do not speak for themselves - they have to be read as texts, then they are viewed as text, then read and interpreted. Notably, document analysis is an:

> in-depth study of documents, which deals with data produced by writers and researchers other than those studying the documents and for a purpose that is possibly different from that of the original writer (Sarantakos, 2005 p. 293).

Document analysis is not limited to qualitative research and is used for "description, identification of trends, frequencies, inter-relationship and sometimes statistical analysis" (Flick, et. al, 2005 p. 2). Document analysis allows for interpretations, examines uncontested statements, and misplaced assumptions. However, a unique feature of qualitative research, from a methodological point of view, is that it lead to Hermeneutics:

> a tradition of interpretation of subjectivity - intended meaning that becomes intelligible with the framework of pre-existing, intuitive everyday prior understanding that exist in every society of meanings which may be objectified (Flick et. al, 2005 p. 2).

Flowing from this tradition is Content Analysis which Sarantakos (2005) defines as "a documentary method that aims at a qualitative and/or qualitative analysis of the content of texts, pictures, films, and other forms of verbal, visual or written communication" (p. 299). It appears that content analysis is by no means a uniform research tool. There are various types of content analysis and I have selected Thematic Content Analysis. Thematic Content Analysis (TCA),

operates within the hermeneutic / ethnographic approaches to content analysis. Unlike traditional (statistical) approaches to content analysis, which rely on fixed or stable units of analysis, content analysis involves a fairly flexible, semantic unit of analysis, such as a word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc (Lee, 1999). For this study I coded key words and themes in all documents.

As mentioned earlier, the method of interpretation for this study is grounded in the Hermeneutics tradition. "Hermeneutics focuses on text interpretation; [which] includes both grammatical as well as psychological interpretation" (Sarantakos, 2005 p. 312). Basically it refers to the art of translating texts, a theory, methodology of interpretation, especially of scriptural text. This method allows for both the first order (reading) and the second order (secondary analysis) theory of understanding and interpretation of linguistic and non-linguistic expressions (Marshall, 1998). In other words, when I first read the document I read it at face value or "taken for granted" meaning. My second reading involved a more in-depth analysis, where I "read between the lines."

Lee (1994) suggests that Hermeneutics:

> assumes that all text-based meaning is negotiated, the text therefore, involve self presentation secrecy hidden agenda and political manipulations. As a result, [Hermeneutics researchers must delve into deeper meaning] (p. 109).

The author also suggests that researchers should:

> read, re-read before or in order to move beyond a superficial understanding. Through such efforts, the text underlying themes and tacit, taken for granted assumptions become evident (p. 109).

Content analysis that is grounded in Hermeneutics allows the researcher to look for both manifest content and latent content. Sarantakos (2005) provides a superb description for both terms which is worth quoting at length:

> The manifest content refers to the visible surface text, the actual parts of the text manifested in the documents: the words, sentences, paragraphs and so on. Here analysis is related to the straightforward and obvious, the visible content of the document, and involves counting frequencies of appearance of the research unit. The latent content is the underlying meaning conveyed through the documents. Here the researchers read between the lines and register the messages; they also identify the hidden meanings that are inherent in the messages. They delve into prejudices, norms and standards that are encoded in the message. They search for ways of decoding the meanings and symbols that are inferred or hidden and that ultimately guide people's behavior. The task of content analysis dealing with latent contents is to deconstruct and reconstruct such messages, to identify their real meaning and the impact the context has on the construction of meanings and their underlying justification (p. 300).

Collecting the Data

"Since there is little standardization of instruments of procedure in collecting data" (Lee, 1994 p. 30), it was a challenge to identify and select from the plethora of policy documents and literature available on topic of interest. To use a metaphor, conducting research for this study is akin to creating a mosaic. My general observations are that for the most part policy documents lack background information and a theoretical framework. However, they do provide references to articles, and public policy documents on which they build on. For example, all key documents selected for this study draw from the Employment Equity Act. Nonetheless, I selected the Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative as a case-study and selected other documents by asking "how will I make sense of this

data" and "how is this material relevant to the study." Once I selected the key documents, I coded key words and themes, made personal notes in the margins and transposed the data on a separate sheet of paper.

Analyzing the documents

In qualitative research, "modes of analysis are not standardized" (Lee, 1994 p. 30); however, there are principles and guidelines. For example, in content analysis grounded in Hermeneutics, researchers focus on latent (deep) content of documents in a very detailed and analytical way. This allows for conclusions to be made on issues that are beyond the text and language (Sarantakos, 2005 p. 293). Hence, I approach the data with the intention of "reading between the lines," imposing meaning based on my paradigm, and I interpret the data from Post-Colonial and Critical Race Theory. In analyzing the text it is imperative to understand the contexts in which it was produced and read (Flick at al, 2005) and it is equally important to examine the hidden as opposed to merely stated propagated argumentation and intentions of documents (Miyou 2004, p. 35). Because the meanings of text reside in the minds of the writer and its reader (Gall et al, 2003 in Miyou) one must study the context in which it was produced, the author's purpose in writing it, authors working conditions, the author's intended purpose and author's intended audience.

Although, it is a challenge to accurately deduce all of the above merely by reading documents (text/language), I hope to grasp at least a fragment of its actual

experience and postulate that author/authors recognize that there is inequity in workplace. Second, they propose and make suggestions on how to create equitable workplaces. Third, the documents are intended for employers and employees, policy analysts, researchers and civil society. Moreover, in keeping with the qualitative research, I declare that I overtly apply my own subjective interpretation, hence I offer a partial narrative. Another integral element in analyzing a document is the audience's purpose for reading the text. Although, this is an intriguing subject, and is well worth investigating it is not covered in this study.

I rely on my prior and current knowledge and draw the following conclusions for two documents (primary and secondary documents).

Figure 2: The following table provides a brief synopsis:

Name of Document	**Purpose in writing the document**	**Author's working conditions**	**Intended Audience**
Anti Racism Workplace Initiative	Report on employer's perceptions of the Employment Equity Act, anti-racism legislations	The report is co-authored and produced by civil society and educational institution	Federal government and provincial contract providers, government officials, and researchers Intended for a defined circle of legitimate or involved recipients (Sarantakos, 2005 p. 284)
Racism-Free Workplace Strategy	Federal Government Strategy to eliminate racism in the Federally regulated and provincial	No single author is recognized. The documents suggest that there was intensive consultation with employers, civil	Federal government and provincial contract providers, government officials and researchers Intended for a defined circle of legitimate or

	contract programs Educate employers about everyday racism, anti-racism strategy Employers roles and responsibilities	society and educational institutions, hence one can deduce that the collection of ideas that were channeled through Human Resource Social Development Canada	involved recipients (Sarantakos, ibid)

Summary

This chapter described the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions, and communicated the study's research paradigm, which is grounded in post colonial, critical race theories. It also provided rationales for the selection of qualitative research methodology as the foundational approach, along with the use of documentary analysis, drawing on methods and principles of content analysis grounded in Hermeneutic tradition.

Chapter 4

Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative and Analysis

Introduction

The chapter draws mainly from the Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative (from here on ARWI), which serves as an ideal case-study to address the thesis question stated in Chapter one. The subsequent section titled 'The Blind-Spot' analyzes the findings based on both literature review and conceptual framework. To embark on this task, I provide a brief definition of Blind Spot and related examples as pertaining to racism in Canadian workplaces. The second segment attempts to answer the following questions, such as the following: why discuss racism and anti-racism strategies in Canada? Is there racism in Canadian workplaces? The subsequent section focuses primarily on responses provided by employers in ARWI study, followed by observations, general findings and analysis. In closing, the political economy and nature of business is briefly discussed.

ARWI- Case Study

The ARWI study/project is an exceptional case-study to answer the two main thesis questions. The project was funded by the federal government, which ultimately led to a nation-wide *Racism-Free Workplace Strategy* (RSWS). Hence, this chapter begins with background information regarding RSWS, in particular the roles and responsibilities of Labour Programs at HRSDC – the main leaders of the initiative. Although, the ARWI project was replicated in five major cities

across Canada: Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax, the focus here is mostly on the Edmonton initiative. The reason for selecting the Edmonton initiative is as follows: I work and live in Edmonton, hence most of my experience is locally based. Moreover, the ARWI Edmonton initiative provides detail information about the labour market, employer's perception and effectiveness of equity policy in the Edmonton context.

The ARWI project consisted of three main components; however, only the first segment is explored mainly due to focus of this study.

1) Conducting interviews with companies participating in the Federal Contractors Program (FCP) or the Legislated Employment Equity Program (LEEP).
2) Holding a racism-free consultation with people representing labour, government, academia, civil society, and employers.
3) Presenting the findings at the 2006 Canadian Metropolis conference in Vancouver in March, 2006.

Background Information

Despite Canada's long history of protective legislations such as the Canadian Human Rights, Charter of Rights and Freedom, Employment Equity Act which aim to create and develop fair, safe and representative workplaces, both literature and public opinion suggests that racism remains a serious problem. For example, a survey conducted by Ipsos Reid, in 2003, suggests that 74% of

Canadians believe that racism is prevalent in Canada. In addition, race-based complaints represent 36% of all complaints filed under the Canadian Human Rights Act (Cheung, 2006). Finally, one in six Canadian adults report that they are subjected to racism (HRSDC, 2006b). In light of the current public environment and the fact that racism is most commonly experienced in the workplace (HRSDC, 2007), Federal government in particular Human Resource Social Development Canada (HRSDC) - Labour programs took a leadership role in the fight against racism. The end product is a national strategy against racism, which is referred to as Racism-Free Workplace Strategy.

Prior to launching the Strategy, Human Resource and Social Development Canada (HRSDC)-Labour conducted various consultation sessions and research projects and established communication with employers and community groups, during 2004-06 (Mehat, 2006). The ARWI is one of the consultation session which took place between January 2006 – March 2006. The on-going consultation sessions and research projects were an integral part of HRSDC-Labour because they measured the effectiveness of employment equity objectives and policies and identified gaps. The research studies provide data to help gain a better understanding of the social and cultural realities of the workplace, thereby highlighting key areas of improvements.

Notably, The Racism-Free Workplace Strategy is also grounded in the 2005 report, *A Canada for All: Canada's Action Plan Against Racism,* arguably the most comprehensive approach to combating racism, which entails a range of

concrete and pragmatic measures, both at the domestic and international levels. The action plan against racism builds on existing legislation, policies and programs. The legal framework behind this national framework includes policies such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Canada's Multi-culturalism Policy, Canadian Human Rights, Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Employment Equity Act. The strategy is also rooted in the Canadian vision of an inclusive, equitable society and sustainable economy for all citizens.

> [T]he plan is organized around the basic principles of the inherent dignity and worth of all human persons, equal dignity and worth of all, and the right of minorities to protection and to equal employment opportunities (HRSDC, 2007, p, 9).

It is worth noting that the five-year, 13 million dollar project aims to remove workplace barriers faced specifically by Aboriginal peoples and visible minorities (Mehat, 2006).

Canada's Action Plan Against Racism is the first coordinated approach across the federal government to combat racism. The four partners are: Canadian Heritage, Justice Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), and Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC)-Labour (Mehat, 2006). However, HRSDC-Labour is the key player, which administers two fundamental pieces of legislations: the Employment Equity Act (EEA) and the Canada Labour Code. The expanded mandate of the EEA, includes federally regulated private sector employers and employers that have contracts with the federal governments. Respectively, they are referrred as Legislated Employment Equity Program (LEEP) and Federal Contractors Program (FCP). Both LEEP and FCP have

extensive obligations under the EEA to hire from the four designated groups: Aboriginal peoples, members of visible minorities, women and people with disabilities (Department of Justice, 2007).

Aside from merely administering and promoting EEA, the Labour program also receives employer reports from LEEP, and verifies them for compliance with the reporting requirements (HRSDC, 2007). The employer's reports are also published and provide the basis for the Minister of Labour's Employment Equity Act Annual Report. The FCP, on the other hand, is administered by the Workplace Equity staff of Labour Standards and Workplace Equity at HRSDC national headquarters as well as by a network of regional workplace equity officers across Canada. These equity officers also enforce the program by conducting periodic onsite compliance reviews at contractors' premises (HRSDC, 2007). Two points are worth mentioning. First, different officers are in-charge of monitoring and compliance processes. Secondly, only LEEP employers are obligated to report annually and are audited by the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative

As mentioned earlier, ARWI is one of the major studies commissioned by HRSDC-Labour Program. The fundamental goal of the ARWI project is to examine employers' perception of racism in relation to visible minority workers. The project also explores HRSDC-Labour's role in promoting Employment

Equity (EE) in federally legislated and provincially contracted workplaces and the effectiveness of current workplace equity policies. The Edmonton study is a joint project between the Prairie Centre for Excellence in Research on Immigration and Integration (PCERII) at the University of Alberta and the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN). One of the rationales for the collaborative model is possibly because PCERII mainly focuses on integration and immigration policies and developing research programs. EMCN, on the other hand, offers direct programs for immigrants and refugees and has a strong history of partnerships with employers and labour leaders.

Interviews with Employers and Labour Leaders

The ARWI project in Edmonton targeted employers and union representatives in Legislated Employment Equity Program (LEEP) and Federal Contract Program (FCP). The interviews took place over a three-week period between January 2006 – March 2006. In total, 11 participants were interviewed: two employers representing LEEP, five FCP, three union leaders, and one employer that was neither FCP nor LEEP. The rationale for selecting a private/for-profit and non-regulated organization was simply for comparative purposes. There were also variations in the companies selected for this study. Sectors included: production, engineering, electrical, plumbing, transportation, call-centre and telecommunications.

Special care was taken to ensure that small, medium and large companies, with regional, national and international offices were included. It is noteworthy that a small organization has a unique culture where employees tend to work in close proximity and a manager serves both as a supervisor and human resource personnel. In medium and large corporations, the Human Resource (H.R) department is a separate entity and H.R staffs generally do not directly supervise employees. The researchers for ARWI project conduced interviews predominantly with the supervisory managers in small companies, and H.R managers in medium and large corporations.

The researchers proposed a series of semi-formal questions relating to racism in the workplace. The employers were requested to recall incidences related to racism, hiring practices, retention and promotion polices. The general categories were as follows: background information, general areas of success, challenges, difficulties and ongoing issues, race relations at work, the unionized environment, responsive structures, analysis and policy work, looking forward and concluding remarks. It was important to investigate if companies who met the criteria for Employment Equity in fact took initiatives in offering diversity/anti-racism training for their staff. Generally, most interviews lasted between 30 and 50 minutes. Seven out of eleven participants requested interview questions prior to the meeting. While ten interviews were conducted in-person, one employer preferred a telephone conference. Likewise, all eleven interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed.

Responses from Employers

Nearly all the employers interviewed made reference to Alberta's booming economy and chronic labour shortages. Consequently, employers including H.R. personnel devoted energies toward keeping up with the labour demand and placed a lesser emphasis on equity issues. On the other hand, employers wanting to create a diversified workforce were frustrated, as they simply could not locate qualified visible minority workers. The discourse around issues related to non-recognition of international credentials dominated much of the conversation, especially in mid-size and large corporations. Despite the rhetoric, employers had great difficulties producing a report detailing the breakdown of the workforce. While the managers in the small and medium size organizations were in the process of gathering the information, large corporations stored the information at their headquarters and were unable to produce it for the researchers. Three H.R managers reported that they were fairly new in their positions, hence, unaware of equity policies and compliance reports.

Interestingly, all eight employers stated that racism was not an issue in their organizations. Employers also suggested that there was much more "visibility" of different races, and that staff was much more accepting of diversity, hence racist jokes were not allowed and workers were much more "accommodating." Employment Equity was also generally perceived as "being good for business and important to the future of the company." While a few employers were committed to diversity and equity policies, others expressed

reservations and emphasized "reverse discrimination" and "merit-based hiring" practices. Interestingly, the non-regulated company contacted for comparative purposes was certainly more pro-active in providing diversity and anti-racism training for both managers and employees. The company accommodated for difference, for example, when a few workers requested a special headset to be worn over the Hijab and Turban.

Managers working in less diversified companies suggested that the lack of "color" in their company was primarily because members of visible minorities, in particular new immigrants, generally possess poor English skills; hence, creating communication barriers for co-workers and customers. One employer stated that her "customers are simply not prepared to deal with diversity…my God, it is sad, but we are living in red-neck Alberta, and people are just not as open as you and me, you know what I mean?"

Fewer than half of the employers had existing policies pertaining to racism in the workplace. For example, most organizations did not offer anti-racism training for new and existing staff, employee surveys, and cultural specific counseling services. Most employers, however, did allocate resources toward workplace health and safety training and sexual harassment workshops. One particular employer implemented personality tests for routine screening and promotion purposes. His rationale was that it assisted him with assigning the "right" individual to a certain project.

Managers in small and medium sized organizations emphasized the lack of time and resources as major barriers in investigating issues around racism and equity. With no specific initiatives to attract and retain visible minority workers, how are these employers able to meet the LEEP and FCP criteria? Again, most employers alluded to "fair and skills-based hiring practices" thereby removing barriers for visible minority workers. Employers continuously reminded researchers that their company and workforce were open to diversity. They also emphasized informal policies and cultivating a workplace culture where racism is not tolerated. The employers also indicated that anti-racism training is an option, granted there is a need - in other words, "why fix something if it is not broken."

Most employers alluded to Canada's Multicultural policy and indicated that there was "a general atmosphere of tolerance of visible minorities and immigrants." As a matter of fact, one particular organization had a social committee (consisting of visible minorities workers) where staff celebrated various cultures, organized regular ethnic potlucks, introduced cultural themes, such as 'Chinese New Year' and made suggestions to cafeteria staff in terms of ethnic delicacies.

Considering that most employers in this study are regulated under EEA and obligated to report on hiring, retention and promotion of visible minorities, the majority were unable to produce a copy of their annual report to the federal government. Several recommendations for the federal government emerged from the interviews. A few employers indicated that they preferred their companies be

audited. The audit would provide an opportunity to identify gaps and improve recruiting, hiring and retention practices. In general, employers expressed the need for support from the federal government in both attracting and maintaining a diversified workplace. The federal government was also criticized for not living up to their own standards and having selective and preferential hiring. There was a perception that the federal government tells companies what they should do but does not give them any guidance on how to do it.

Labour Leaders

In contrast to the interviews with employers, dialogues with labour leaders yielded a very distinct picture. The two union leaders interviewed were very knowledgeable about both individual and systemic barriers faced by members of visible minorities. These leaders were not only passionate about equity issues, but were working diligently with employees to remove barriers and raise awareness of worker's rights. As a matter of fact, one of the leaders wanted to publish and disseminate a booklet on employee's rights, including anti-racism practices. Although the employer was not in support of such an initiative, the labour leader, with support from other workers was able to publish the manual. Two of the three labour leaders interviewed indicated that they were working hard to ensure that visible minority workers are represented in the union at all levels. Their rationale was that the "union is a reflection of the company", hence the need for diversified union representatives. On the other extreme, one union

representative reported very few cases related to racism in the workplace. Ironically, the disgruntled workers in this company had been on strike for over six months and in fact accused the company of human rights violations.

In general, the labour leaders discussed several challenges in combating racism in the workplace. One of the biggest challenges mentioned was the covert and subtle nature of everyday racism. Racism, they found, is difficult to prove. If and when a minority worker takes the initiative and wants a formal investigation, it is difficult to get colleagues (both White and racialized workers) to provide evidence against the perpetuator. It was also indicated that grievances had a low success rate. Union leaders also mentioned "a lack of acknowledgment" on the part of employers that racism exists. Systemic barriers are also a major problem; however, "many people don't see it and don't recognize the damage that such policies have done." One of the leaders also suggested that it was primarily the "corporate culture" which did not support an inclusive work environment, making it difficult for visible minority workers to fit in. He also indicated that the employer is resistant to implementing union initiatives relating to diversity, such as mandatory training on race relations, anti-racism and human rights training. Finally, labour leaders also alluded to common myths such as immigrants are "stealing" jobs from local Canadians.

"Blind-Spot": Analysis to ARWI

A Definition and examples of Blind-Spots

I conceptualize the term Blind-Spot(s) outside rationality, almost at an out-of-awareness level and unstated assumptions. It includes words, behaviors/action and omission. Again in keeping with the scope of the study and its intended purpose, an exhaustive list is unwarranted. However, for clarity, I will provide a few examples of Blind-Spots in workplaces.

- Refutation of racism by White employers, employees and union leaders.
- Unequal representation in an organization- all decision-making positions are taken up by White peoples.
- Selecting candidates who are White, and eliminating "people of color" with the same or better experience.
- Both official policy (written) and unwritten rules are in keeping with the dominant, White European culture.
- When issues of racism are brought forth, the complaint is dismissed and if addressed, if focuses on the individual rather then examining the entire organization.
- Calling racism by a different name: diversity/multi-cultural training.
- Job assignments leading to promotions are often provided to White employees.
- Providing mentorship, "directors taking the White subordinate under his/her wings."

- Assigning "people of colour" only to social committees, fund-raising events and Multi-cultural celebrations.

Beyond doubt, this list can possibly take up an entire chapter; however, the question remains, why discuss racism?

Why discuss racism in Canada?

The aging workforce and declining birthrates are causing major worker shortages in a variety of occupations across the country. In certain occupations such as healthcare, there is an additional phenomenon such as accelerated retirement and the "brain drain" to the United States (Goldberg, 2006). Federal government immigration policies reflect an increasing demand for immigrants to alleviate such labour shortages. However, many professional positions remain vacant due to non-recognition of the credentials of the International Educated Professional (Reitz, 2001), a topic worthy of discussion but beyond the mandate of this thesis. It is suggested that immigrants are expected to account for all labour market growth by 2011 (Human Resources Development Canada, 2002). According to our past Federal Minister of Immigration "Canada's future is dependent on immigration" (Volpe, 2005). Once again the skill shortage discourse is not neutral and is worth investigating; however, it is also beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that immigrants will continue to arrive in Canada unable to practice their occupations.

This new wave of immigrants will be arriving mainly from non-traditional source countries, mostly Asian, such as China, India, Pakistan and Philippines (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003) resulting in greater visibility of "races", ethnicities and cultures. As a result, workplaces will mirror similar demographics and will be forced to tackle issues of "race" and racism, necessitating anti-racism education in the workplaces. What is the current situation? Is there racism in Canada?

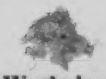
Racism in Canada: A Snap Shot

Ethnic Diversity Surveys (EDS),[i] report that 65% of member of visible minorities experience racism in their workplaces. Federal government reports along with academic literature (Alboim, 2002; Reitz, 2001) and anecdotes continuously suggest that members of visible minorities experience systemic racism in Canadian workplaces. For example, the Report on Racial Status which uses Income Outcome, Census, and Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, clearly demonstrates that racialized minorities are subjected to discrimination and racism:

> [T]here is evidence that there remain large and consistent gaps in economic security for workers of colour compared to other workers. These differences are not based on real differences of skills and education, but rather on perceived differences based on race. Racial discrimination is a large contributing factor to the poor labour market outcomes of Canada's racialized workers. Lower incomes, higher unemployment, and precarious work status are prevalent for workers of colour as a whole, and not just recent immigrants. In fact, it is the non-immigrant, racialized population, who are more highly educated than average, which has the most

> difficulty finding steady employment at decent wages. The fact that Canadian-born workers of colour are doing badly cannot be explained away by reference to lack of Canadian credentials and experience (Cheung, 2005, p.1).

While both publicly funded (Cheung, 2005; Ethnic Diversity Surveys, 2004) and private research (Ipsos-Reid Surveys) continually report that there is systemic racism in Canada, be it institutional or in the workplace, there is consensus amongst the general public that Canadians are not racist, as compared to other nations (Schick & Verma, 2005). Hence, marginalized people, unemployed and /or working class are at a disadvantage because they either lack skills, attitudes or credentials. This lack of awareness, ownership and denial of organizational racism leads to unexamined social relations, workplace policies and practices, which may in fact, perpetuate the status quo. Consequently, dialoguing around issues of race and racism in the workplace is a challenge for anyone catering to the ideals of human rights and equity.



Anti-Racism Workplace: Employer's Perception

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Anti Racism Workplace Initiative examines employer's and union's perceptions of racism and anti-racism strategy in the workplace. The study focuses primarily on companies which are legislated under the Employment Equity Program and Federal Contract Program. These companies have extensive obligation to attract, hire and promote all four equity groups: Aboriginal, women, people with disabilities and visible minorities. In addition, senior management in these companies are obligated to provide on-

going diversity and anti-racism training for their staff. The assumptions are that if a company is diversified, they are likely to deal with issues of racism, consequently, create space to discuss, and adapt an anti-racism strategy in their workplace.

Observations and General Findings

All eight employers contacted (five females and three males) were White. They were in positions of power (e.g., supervisor, manager). Their titles were as follows: human resource manager, director of operations, director of human resources and general manager. While the study sample is small, most organizations have offices both at national and international levels; hence one can make some qualified generalizations. A few companies were fairly small, with only 17 employees; consequently, a manager served both as a supervisor, human resource personnel and co-worker. The implications of this finding will be discussed later in this section.

In terms of policy, fewer than half of the employers interviewed indicated that they had policies in place relating specifically to racism. Some company representatives talked about informal policies and cultivating a workplace culture in which racism is not tolerated. Specific anti-racism training was uncommon. Some employers indicated that training could be done if management perceived a need. Others mentioned that training was in place that was not specifically related to anti-racism but which might indirectly help prevent racism (e.g. anti-

harassment training or training related to different personality types working together effectively)..

Analyzing the Findings

Canadians view racism as something that happened in the past, in other nations; hence, to them racism is not a Canadian problem (Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Our case study exemplifies Lopes and Thomas's description of institutionalized and internalized racism, where employers are un-critical of their practices, although they meet the criteria for Employment Equity quotas, is oblivious to the existence of that racism. Another explanation is "defensive complacency", in which employers simply do not either take time or initiatives to investigate complaints which are raised by racialized workers, and conclude that there is no racism in their workplace. The non-recognition of organizational racism is also due to the White workers lack of awareness of their class/race privilege and power (Hurtado & Stewart, 1996). Furthermore, the rhetoric of Canadian Multi-culturism, with sentiments such as "Canada is a savior" and "Canadians embrace and celebrate diversity," lead employers to believe that their business policies and practices are color-blind, benevolent, and innocent. This innocence, however, must be critiqued and problematized because if left unchallenged, it leads to reproduction of racial privilege (Schick & St. Denis, 2005).

Organizational racism may be denied in order to avoid guilt, ownership and responsibility, and in fact, may be a backlash. Whites are now being seen as the new victim; consequently, equity programs are perceived as a nuisance and a new discourse emerges called "reverse discrimination." Perhaps, many of the employers in our case study witness racism in the workplace, but it's the "code of silence" and "White solidarity" (Hurtado & Stewart, 1996) which keeps them from exposing wrongdoing. I concur with Lopes and Thomas who suggest that organizational racism is mostly internalized racism, hence we should investigate how "White Power and privilege work in the ordinary, daily moments of organizational life" (2006, p.1).

Employers often claim that they are open to diversity, which in their view means they are open to anti-racism education. George Dei cautions us against this naivety as he clarifies the difference:

> [M]ulticulturism works with the notion of our basic humanness and downplays inequities of difference by accentuating shared commonalities. Anti-racism, shifts the talk away from tolerance of diversity to the pointed notion of difference and power. It sees race and racism as central to how we claim, occupy and defend spaces' (Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 21).

I believe that employers are reluctant to place anti-racism education under "good business practices" because it would mean dialoguing around issues of racism, examining one's own position, privilege and power. Therefore, it is much too safe to adhere to discourse on Multi-culturism, and celebrate the 3ds: dress, dance and dinner. I agree with Schick and St. Denis who warn us that:

> celebration of cultural difference and the narrative of the nation as raceless, benevolent and innocent has implications for the reproduction of

> racial privilege...[in fact], multicultural discourses, are not only insufficient but even counter-productive (Ibid., p. 296).

In keeping with this argument, I suggest that unless employers acknowledge and employ anti-racism strategies in the workplace, the effects of colonization will continue.

Academics keep proposing that researchers spend time and energies to re-conceptualize "race"/racism (Darder & Torres, 2003); however, there is an urgent need to move beyond rhetoric and the on-going debate on its construction. For example, much has been written about the lack of integration of Internationally Educated Professionals into the Canadian labour market; however, writers tend to fall short on providing concrete suggestions. Therefore, we hear an endless rendition about labour shortages, wasted human capital and the lack of recognition of foreign credentials. We must get past this! I believe that we have sufficient ammunition: both research (objective) and anecdotal (subjective) evidence that racism is prevalent in Canadian society. Therefore, we need to focus on strategies that help facilitate integration and social relationships in the workplace.

Sufficient data on discrimination, prejudice and racism as discussed and analyzed by various researchers in such disciplines as sociology, psychology and organizational management is available. However, it was difficult to find an article, which would describe the everyday experience of a racialized worker. Hence, it is my position that whenever we discuss organizational racism, we should give equal attention to the employer and the employee and the issue of

domination and subordination in the workplace. Aside from wage differentials, racialized workers are often overlooked for training, promotions, responsibilities and resources. For example, everything from office space, location, computer usage, job title, and "voices" acknowledged at meetings, to interaction with senior management is allocated and determined based on race. Hurtado and Stewart state that anybody who "acts" according to the prescribed (White) standards is meritorious and deserving of societal and economic rewards. Hence, racialized workers who do not fit this criteria "deserve to be marginalized."

Referring back to the case study examined in this thesis, it is interesting to note that all eleven companies were incorporated under the Employment Equity Act, hence they meet the criteria for hiring the four designated groups. Surprisingly, there were no systemic approaches to hiring diverse employees, anti-racism strategy and training offered to staff. We can therefore argue that a policy on equity does little to change attitudes, eliminate systemic barriers, and reduce racism in the workplace. On the contrary, equity programs are at best a numbers game, where companies hire to meet the designated numbers mostly in entry-level jobs (which fulfill the equity criteria yet maintain the status quo.)

Interestingly enough, the report on Racism Free Workshop (Ibid) indicates that union leaders acknowledged equity issues and organizational racism. As a matter of fact, in one instance, the union leader published a booklet for members of visible minorities to educate them on human rights issues, gender equality and organizational racism. Furthermore, these leaders were also well aware that

marginalized workers experience multiple challenges in substantiating their claims of discrimination. For example, the racialized worker needs to keep a strict record of interactions, dialogue between workers, supervisors and daily incidents of racism. This is to suggest that the victim is expected to produce evidence of their marginalization, and gain the support of colleagues before they can file a grievance. Hence, "the burden is placed on the victim to overcome such barriers" (Schick & St. Denis, 2005, p. 296).

Why is there a disconnect between self-reported cases of racism, union observations and employers' perception of racism? Lopes & Thomas (2006) argue that it is because those in power often do not see, feel and hear racism; only the people of colour know it exists. Furthermore, organizational racism is the result of established procedures of recruitment, hiring and promotion. Discrimination is then reinforced by the exclusion of the disadvantaged group. This exclusion results from "natural" forces (Lopes & Thomas, 2006). For example, if there is a belief that a black woman cannot serve in a supervisory role, the organization creates a climate in which women do not feel good about their leadership skills. Then any challenge to the status quo is automatically resisted and challenged.

Political Economy: The Business Model

An uncritical examination of the companies operating under the capitalist business model reveals that managers often lack the time and energy to devote to

organizational racism (Lopes & Thomas, 2006). In light of this, a more critical examination of modern day racism in light of deep-rooted historical events of colonization and global production is required. Peter McLaran convincingly argues that:

> educators need to consider racism in its present incarnations developed out of the dominant mode of global production during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly out of colonial plantations in the new Worlds with slave labor imported from Africa to produce consumer goods such as tobacco, sugar, and cotton. How the immigrant working class has been divided historically along racial lines is a process that needs to be better understood…[hence organizational racism gives] White workers a particular identity that unites them with white capitalists (2003, p. 169).

Historicity aside, everyday business practice is presented as "natural" and bears testimony that, like racism, the efficiency/productivity model has been internalized. For example, formal atmosphere, protocol and business meetings are designed to function in a specific manner, follow strict guidelines and have time constraints. In both the corporate world and in non-government offices, there appears to a "constant crisis" to meet deadlines, submit proposals or cater to a funder's needs. Businesses operate like clockwork, where workers are timed-in and timed-out, perform their duties, are evaluated on productivity, and deficiency, and any initiatives which translate into profitability are most definitely appraised. Consequently, racialized workers have limited if any space to "voice" their subjective realities, and initiate dialogue around race/racism, domination/subordination and social relations. Furthermore, managers are often not prepared to address emotionally and socially charged issues in the workplace.

Ira Shor and Paulo Freire encourage teachers to be more self-reflective; likewise, White workers also need to stop the "frenzy" and reflect on their practices.

Summary

This chapter drew mainly from the Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative, which served as an ideal case-study to address the thesis question stated in the first chapter. The section titled 'The Blind-Spot' analyzed the findings based on both a literature review and a conceptual framework. A brief definition of Blind Spot(s) and related examples as pertaining to racism in Canadian workplaces were also discussed. The second section answered the following questions, why discuss racism and anti-racism strategies in Canada? Is there racism in Canadian workplaces? The final portion focused primarily on responses provided by employers surveyed in the ARWI study. This was followed up by observations, general findings and analysis. A brief discussion of the political economy and nature of business was also included.

[1] Ethnic Diversity Surveys are conducted by Statistics Canada to help us better understand how people's backgrounds affect their participation in the social, economic and cultural life. For more information visit: www.statcan.ca

Chapter 5

Anti-Racism Education

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

I begin this chapter by focusing on contemporary anti-racism education. The case-study also bears testimony to Dei's (1996) argument that anti-racism education is not a neutral activity and that White educators who do not take stock of their relative positions of power, privilege and neglect to examine power relations between dominant and minority ethnic groups may in fact perpetuate the status quo. In addition, the federal government's approach to anti-racism education is examined. This includes a critical examination of the content of the Racism Free Workplace Strategy Participants Handbook (2007). The case study and the booklet beg the following questions:

1) Is introducing and implementing anti-racism workshops sufficient to challenge an employer's perceptions and create equitable work places?
2) Can White-Euro-Canadians serve as anti-racism educators?

This final chapter also offers a summary of discussions from the previous chapters. The subsequent section presents a series of recommendations followed by suggestions for further research.

Racism-Free Workplace Strategy & Anti-Racism Education

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the number of self-identified cases of racism in workplaces is increasing. Human rights complaints based on "race" are also on the rise; however, employers continue to resist and refute the existence of racism. Whereas, many workplaces in Canada are either federally (LEEP) or provincially (FCP) regulated and are obliged to provide fair, safe and representative workplaces (HRSDC, 2007), employers are facing challenges in meeting these essential requirements (see: ARWI study in chapter four). The federal government's approach is to introduce yet another initiative – the Racism-Free Workplace Strategy (RFWS), which claims to remove barriers to employment and enhance the upward mobility of members of visible minorities and Aboriginals.

A key component of the strategy is to provide anti-racism workshops to both LEEP and FCP employers/employees and union representatives. But what is this anti-racism education? What type of anti-racism intervention does the federal government provide?

First, I will provide a basic definition, and secondly, a case study to illustrate that anti-racism education can easily be slipped into a diversity/multicultural exercise. What is the difference between these two types of education? I share George Dei's (2000) contention, which is worth quoting in its entirety:

> multiculturalism works with the notion of our basic humanness and downplays inequalities of difference by accentuating shared

> commonalities. Anti-racism, on the other hand, views as suspect the whole nation-building enterprise as pursued by the dominant, together with the underlying assumptions of empathy, commonality and goodwill. Anti-racism shifts the talk away from tolerance of diversity to the pointed notion of difference and power. It sees race and racism as a central to how we claim, occupy and defend spaces. The task of anti-racism is to identify, challenge and change the values, structures and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism and other forms of societal oppressions (p, 21).

Anti-Racism & Critical Anti-Racism Education

Irrespective of how we conceptualize "race" or the ways in which we theorize about it, there is little doubt that our society is color-coded: "race" is a reality for "people of color" and

> there is a social, political, cultural and intellectual meaning to 'race' despite its lack of scientific status. No amount of intellectual gymnastics…can evade, deny the powerful social and political currency of 'race' and its intellectual and emotional meaning in [Canadian] society (Dei & Calliste, 2000, p, 14).

Basically the authors' main argument is that "race" has powerful material, political, symbolic and spiritual consequences, and it serves no purpose to those who are disadvantaged by race to deny its salience. On a optimistic note, "the contemporary theorizing of anti-racism and social difference is speaking to the power of human agency" (ibid, p, 11), which provides space for visible minority writers (See: Dei, 2000; Razack, 1998; hooks, 1991) to share counter and oppositional knowledge, challenging colonial and imperial discourses. This new "counter narrative" allows anti-racism educators to use one's experiences, social location to initiate dialogue around anti-racism work.

In terms of a definition, it is worthwhile to compare and contrast a mechanical as opposed to critical anti-racism education in workplace. Technical definitions, and the objectives of anti-racism education, claim to challenge racist beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, while recognizing the impact and consequences of racism in the workplace for the purpose of helping to create a more inclusive environment (HRSDC, 2007). On the other hand, critical anti-racism education takes into account historical specificity and defines it as an

> action orientated, educational and political strategy for institutional and systemic change [that] addresses the issues of racism and the interlocking system of social oppression (sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism (Dei & Calliste, 2000, p, 13).

Critical anti-racism education also questions the neutrality of anti-racism education and challenges White privilege and practices.

Dei (2003), in reference to White teachers and minority students suggests that educators must begin to understand the students through the lens of "race" as a salient part of a myriad identity. I believe that the same is true for White employers, who often deny the existence of racism because it is unsettling and because it is very complex. Lopes & Thomos (2006) build on the definition further by adding that anti-racism education:

> mobilizes the skills and knowledge of racialized people in order to work for a redistribution of power in organization and society. It also equips White people with knowledge and skills to acknowledge their own privilege and to work for social change (2006, p, 264).

Case-Study: Workshop on Anti-Racism in Edmonton

In May 2007, I had an opportunity to attend an anti-racism workshop hosted by a private consulting agency[21] that was contracted by Human Resource Social Development Canada- Labour Department. Despite extensive advertisement there were nine female participants, mostly from private organizations operating under the Federal Contract Program. Three of the participants were fairly new to their positions and their roles as human resource managers. Despite extensive work histories, they had limited knowledge of the Federal Contract Program in attracting, recruiting and retaining visible minorities and Aboriginals. One participant had broad knowledge about anti-racism education; however, she worked for a non-governmental organization, which was very aware of issue, and she was invited mainly to promote the programs and services and to engage the participants in anti-racism activities. The workshop objectives stated in the workshop were as follows:

> to combat racism in the workplace by helping to create the conditions within an organization that make it more difficult for racism to exist, to promote positive inclusion of members of visible minority and Aboriginal peoples and to enhance interaction between ethnic groups on the principles of equality, cultural awareness and respect (HRSDC, 2007, p. 5).

There were two male facilitators, one was White[22] and the other an Aboriginal; however, the former primarily dominated the workshop. Shortly after quick introductions of the participants, the facilitator divided the group into two

[21] The name and details of the private agency are omitted to protect the identity of the facilitators.
[22] The facilitator alluded to his part-Arabic/Middle-Eastern heritage, however, he had white skin color and he declared to be a White Caucasian male.

teams and posed questions related to immigration, race and racism in Canadian society in particular workplaces. This was followed up with a series of short films on stereotypes, prejudice and racism toward Aboriginal and visible minority workers. Closer to the end of the workshop, the group was divided in order to debate on a selected topic (based on group consensus). Finally, participants were expected to complete an evaluation form and offer suggestions on the following components: course content, exercises, facilities, and facilitator.

Racism-Free Workplace Strategy Participant's Handbook

An initial review of the Workshop Participant's Handbook (2007) was certainly impressive. The following features were outstanding: glossy paper, coil bind, large print, easily identified subsections, along with a summary, appealing glossary, color scheme, layouts, use of simple non-academic language, and other features too numerous to mention. The handbook provided the background to the Racism Free Workplace Strategy along with a legal framework, highlighting key concepts, definitions and forms of racism, racial profiling, harassment, poisoned work environment and numerous techniques and strategies in creating a racism-free work environment.

Analysis

On the surface, the workshop exercises, handouts and workbook all appear to be arranged to help participants become more knowledgeable about the

Government of Canada's Racism-Free Workplace Strategy and racism in the workplace. It is my position that the facilitators were certainly successful in satisfying the first objective but perhaps failed to achieve the latter. Three units will be analyzed: first, the question/answer exercise; second, the video presentations; and lastly, the handbook. During the question and answer segment there were a number of teaching moments, but they were overlooked. The video clips basically depicted Aboriginal peoples and members of visible minority groups subjected to racism; however, there was a total omission of any mention of White privilege. The written materials are extremely impressive, glossy, visually appealing; however, there were multiple omissions. First of all, Whites were not required to take ownership of race and class privilege. Secondly, the facilitator should have discussed issues of colonization, neo-colonization and globalization. When I brought these issues forward, I was basically ignored, silenced and shut out of the conversation.

Arguably, the goals and principles of anti-racism education are closely related to critical multiculturalism and human rights education. In theory, all three approaches emphasize that the unequal distribution of power must be addressed (Lizotte, 1997). However, in spite of its claim, anti-racism education has often failed to transform organizations into equitable workplaces. Perhaps the failure is due to the fact that anti-racism education "fail[s] to deal with implicit, hidden and systemic issues and challenge existing power relations" (ibid, p.10). Another possible explanation is that an anti-racism education session can be easily

converted into a multi-cultural/diversity training workshop (see the case study above).

This is all determined by how the material is used and who facilitates the class and this may depend on the race and vested interest of the facilitator. Is he/she only going through the motions? Or is he/she authentically committed. What is an authentic commitment? Someone who is "authentically committed" looks for learning opportunities or teachable moments; they speak up and do not brush aside issues of power, racism white privilege and power.

Summary of Findings

In this study I have shared my personal experiences and showcased a case study – the Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative (ARWI) to address the two main thesis questions:

1.Does protective legislation ensure equity in the workplace?

2.Why do White Euro-Canadian employers refute the existence of racism?

The review of related literature identified that Employment Equity in Canada developed in the broader context of establishing equality rights for citizens who have been historical oppressed. However, despite numerous pieces of legislation and public policy, there exists a significant disconnect between policy and praxis. The studies indicated that racism is prevalent in the workplace, yet White employers continue to deny its existence. Moreover, policy alone without implementation is ineffective.

The following section summarizes the major findings of the ARWI study. In the first place all employers were White Euro-Canadians. They were in positions of power; for example, they served as supervisors, managers and in decision-making roles. Secondly, all employers stated that racism was not an issue in their organizations. In fact, employers reported that there was much more "visibility" of different races, and that staff was much more accepting of diversity, hence racist jokes were not allowed and people were much more "accommodating." Thirdly, most managers did not have the time and resources to investigate (in form of employees surveys, etc), and to offer anti-racism training. Fourth, there was no official policy on anti-racism education or training for staff because it was believed that there was a "general atmosphere of tolerance of visible minorities and immigrants." The social committee was very active in ensuring that various cultures were celebrated, so they organized regular pot lucks, introduced cultural themes, such as 'Chinese New Year' and suggested that the cafeteria offer ethnic delicacies on a regular basis.

Fifth, all employers suggested that hiring be "for skills." Their response clearly indicates that they accept the ideals of a meritocracy, which in their view levels the playing field for all job seekers. In other words they have a "may the best person win" attitude. Sixth, fewer than half of the employers interviewed indicated that they had policies in place relating specifically to racism. Some company representatives talked about informal policies and cultivating a workplace culture in which racism would not be tolerated. Specific anti-racism

training was uncommon. Some employers indicated that training could be done if management perceived a need. Others mentioned that training was in place that was not specifically related to anti-racism but which might indirectly help prevent racism (e.g. anti-harassment training or training related to different personality types working together effectively).

In general, there was consensus amongst employers that racism was a non-issue in their respective workplaces. Hiring is primarily merit based. Despite public policy, practical implementation or enforcement, and possible sanctions, most employers were unable to produce a report highlighting workforce participation. Employers were also unsure as to how to attract, retain and promote members of visible minorities. Although the ARWI utilized a small sample size, it provides insight into the types of problems employers face when implementing the EEA.

Today, we have yet another strategy to combat racism – the Racism-Free Workplace Strategy (RFWS) which aspires to remove barriers to employment and to enable upward mobility in the workplace with a view to reducing levels of racism and discrimination – all of this to be done by facilitating Anti-Racism workshops. However, as we have witnessed from the case-study noted earlier, anti-racism devoid of a discussion of White privilege and power perpetuates the status quo.

Conclusion

Anti racism policies, legislation and in particular workshops are ineffective and denial of racism persists – as do perceptions of the existence /pervasiveness of racism – why?

- Faulty design
- Faulty teaching practices
- Lack of knowledge on the part of employers/employees and facilitators
- Lack of ownership by White employers/employees

Recommendations

When discussing issues of racism in the workplace, it is tempting to create an exhaustive list of things, which ought to be done; however, drawing from the Anti-Racism Workplace Initiative, Racism-Free Workplace Strategy, and in particular the Anti-Racism Education Workshop the following improvements are recommended:

1. First and foremost, White employers/employees must recognize and take ownership of the knowledge that racism is part of the socio-historical roots of Canada. Moreover, they ought to acknowledge that racism is prevalent in Canadian society, including workplaces (Lopes & Thomas, 2006). Employers should also embrace protective legislations such as the Employment Equity Act which advocates hiring of members of four groups (Aboriginals, women, people with disabilities and members of visible minorities) who have been

historically disadvantaged due to discrimination (Jain et al, 1991, p. 137). Flowing from this sentiment is the ownership of White privilege and power. White employers/employees need to accept that systemic barriers for "people of color" exist and that they cannot judge the situation from their social location (see chapter one, introduction section). Moreover, racism is not a problem for the "other" group to resolve. All employers/workers must be part of the solution.

2. The Employment Equity Act is undergoing a 20-year review (HRSDC, 2007). There is also evidence that there has been a significant shift in political thinking, which threatens the goals of Canada's broad-based equality agenda of the last 30 years (Congress, 2007). It is my position that the federal government cannot "do away" with the policy and should be held accountable under the terms of the Employment Equity Act. The federal government, in particular HRSDC, ought to continue to take the lead in enforcing the Employment Equity Act and introducing initiatives such as the Racism-Free Workplace Strategy to combat racism in the workplace. Also, the government can no longer afford to leave companies to monitor their own progress and simply suggest that they take "reasonable steps" to increase diversity.

   HRSDC-labour can certainly take a pro-active role in ensuring that companies funded and contracted under the federal government are in compliance and have specific anti-racism policies in place. The ARWI case-study serves as an exemplary testimonial which suggests that policy without

"any teeth" or serious ramifications for employers in breach of the Employment Equity Act are fruitless.

From the outset, HRSDC should ensure that companies display the Employment Equity Act and anti-racism policy in public. In fact, any policy pertaining to any/all equity groups should be created in consultation with the respective groups. In addition, all staff, including union members, should be informed about the various "myths" and "realities" of the Employment Equity Act.

HRSDC-labour can conduct a national search for individuals committed to social justice and anti-racism to be part of sub-committees to work at a regional level. These sub-committees, which consist of members from all equity groups, would conduct paper audits, ideally every year. The regional sub-committees can perhaps also visit workplaces and observe the working environment and distributions of equity groups. The audit-team also ought to examine the "level of experience" of workers and compare them to their location in the organization or hierarchy.

These paid sub-committee members would monitor hiring practices, especially, and evaluate recruitment and selection processes. In large organizations, such as educational institutions, the committee would examine the effectiveness of a decentralized versus a centralized style of recruitment. The decentralized process would certainly expose hiring based on nepotism, while centralized hiring practices may result in systemic barriers for equity

groups. Basically, the sub-committee would serve as the liaison between the federal government and the businesses while providing education and support. Besides monitoring employers, they would continue to identify barriers and act to reduce them.

3. There ought to be mandatory training including but not limited to: diversity, cross-cultural and anti-racism for all staff including management, human resource personnel and board members. Not only should there be 'zero' tolerance toward racism in the workplace, but managers should allow for time and resources to investigate situations (in forms of employees surveys, etc), and offer anti-racism training to all new recruits. The case-study in this chapter bears testimony to Dei's (ibid) argument that anti-racism education is not a neutral activity and White educators who do not take stock of their relative positions of power and privilege and neglect to examine the power relations between dominant and minority ethnic groups, may in fact perpetuate the status quo. Lastly, visible minority workers need to be consulted on both the design and delivery of these workshops.
4. White employers including new recruits in human resources need to be cognizant of the fact that "visibility" of different races in their workplace does not necessarily guarantee that the company has an inclusive, respectful work environment. Celebrating cultures, hosting Multi-Cultural days is good for cross-cultural understanding; however, that does not speak to power relations, nor does it remove systemic barriers for people of colour. In fact, employers

may meet the Employment Equity criteria by hiring a few token "people of color" and the workers may not have equal access to opportunities, promotion, training and advancement in the organization.

5. The rhetoric "we hire for skills" should be reconsidered and the ideals of meritocracy clarified. In fact, hiring managers, supervisors and human resource personnel should examine existing recruitment processes, identifysystemic barriers, and in consultation with equity groups, take measures to remove them. Moreover, opportunities such as volunteering, job-shadow, co-op and internship should be created specifically for equity groups. New recruits from equity groups should be "matched" to senior staff for guidance and mentorship.

Suggestions for further studies

A few suggestions for further study in the areas related to Employment Equity policy and pragmatism include:

1. A longitudinal study that compares internationally educated professional workers in legislated and contracted workplaces, to Euro-Canadian workers. The analysis ought to include education level, skills, and experiences.
2. A phenomenological/narrative inquiry of "visible minority workers" in unskilled, skilled and professional jobs is much needed. As mentioned in chapter three, a non-traditional/non-western methodology is required to capture the essence, tacit knowledge and experiences of "people of color."

3. Exemplary practices in Anti-racism education addressing unequal distribution of power, theories of colonialism, neo-colonialism, critical race theories and theories of White privilege and power. The methodologies of delivery should be given particular attention.

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